

The CALENDAR *of Modern Letters*

VOLUME I
NUMBER 6

AUGUST
1925

Breughel.

By ALDOUS HUXLEY.

MOST of our mistakes are fundamentally grammatical. We create our own difficulties by employing an inadequate language to describe facts. Thus, to take one example, we are constantly giving the same name to more than one thing, and more than one name to the same thing. The results, when we come to argue, are deplorable. For we are using a language which does not adequately describe the things about which we are arguing.

The word "painter" is one of those names whose indiscriminate application has led to the worst results. All those who, for whatever reason and with whatever intention, put brushes to canvas and make pictures are called, without distinction, painters. Deceived by the uniqueness of the name, aestheticians have tried to make us believe that there is a single painter-psychology, a single function of painting, a single standard of criticism. Fashion changes and the views of art critics with it. At the present time it is fashionable to believe in form to the exclusion of subject. Young people almost swoon away with excess of aesthetic emotion before a Matisse. Two generations ago they would have been wiping their eyes before the latest Landseer. (Ah, those more than human, those positively Christ-like dogs—how they moved, what lessons they taught! There had been no religious painting like Landseer's since Carlo Dolci died.)

These historical considerations should make us chary of believing too exclusively in any single theory of art. One kind of painting, one set of ideas are fashionable at any given moment. They are made the basis of a theory which condemns all other kinds of painting and all preceding critical theories. The process constantly repeats itself.

At the present moment, it is true, we have achieved an unprecedentedly tolerant eclecticism. We are able, if we are up-to-date, to enjoy everything, from negro sculpture to Lucca della Robbia and from Magnasco to Byzantine mosaics. But it is an eclecticism achieved at the expense of almost the whole content of the various works of art considered. What we have learned to see in all these works is their formal qualities, which we abstract and arbitrarily call essential. The subject of the work, with all that the painter desired to express in it beyond his feelings about formal relations, contemporary criticism rejects as unimportant. The young painter scrupulously avoids introducing into his pictures anything that might be mistaken for a story, or the expression of a view of life, while the young *Kunstsforcher* turns, as though at an act of exhibitionism, from any manifestation by a contemporary of any such forbidden interest in drama or philosophy. True, the old masters are indulgently permitted to illustrate stories and express their thoughts about the world. Poor devils, they knew no better! Your modern observer makes allowance for their ignorance and passes over in silence all that is not a matter of formal relations. The admirers of Giotto (as numerous to-day as were the admirers of Guido Reni a hundred years ago) contrive to look at the master's frescoes without considering what they represent, or what the painter desired to express. Every germ of drama or meaning is disinfected out of them; only the composition is admired. The process is analogous to reading Latin verses without understanding them—simply for the sake of the rhythmical rumbling of the hexameters.

It would be absurd, of course, to deny the importance of formal relations. No picture can hold together without composition and no good painter is without some specific passion for form as such—just as no good writer is without a passion for words and the arrangement of words. It is obvious that no man can adequately express himself unless he take

an interest in the terms which he proposes to use as his medium of expression. Not all painters are interested in the same sort of forms. Some, for example, have a passion for masses and the surfaces of solids. Others delight in lines. Some compose in three dimensions. Others like to make silhouettes on the flat. Some like to make the surface of the paint smooth and, as it were, translucent, so that the objects represented in the picture can be seen distinct and separate, as through a sheet of glass. Others (as for example Rembrandt) love to make a rich thick surface which shall absorb and draw together into one whole all the objects represented, and that in spite of the depth of the composition and the distance of the objects from the plane of the picture. All these purely aesthetic considerations are, as I have said, important. All artists are interested in them ; but almost none are interested in them to the exclusion of everything else. It is very seldom indeed that we find a painter who can be inspired merely by his interest in form and texture to paint a picture. Good painters of "abstract" subjects or even of still lifes are rare. Apples and solid geometry do not stimulate a man to express his feelings about form and make a composition. All thoughts and emotions are inter-dependent. Our faculties work best in a congenial emotional atmosphere. For example, Mantegna's faculty for making noble arrangements of forms was stimulated by his feelings about heroic and god-like humanity. Expressing those feelings, which he found exciting, he also expressed—and in the most perfect manner of which he was capable—his feelings about masses, surfaces, solids and voids. His hero worship made him, by stimulating his faculty for composition, paint better. If Isabella d'Este had made him paint apples, table napkins and bottles, he would have produced, being uninterested in these objects, a poor composition. And yet, from a purely formal point of view, apples, bottles, and napkins are quite as interesting as human bodies and faces. But Mantegna—and with him the majority of painters—did not happen to be very passionately interested in these inanimate objects. When one is bored one becomes boring.

Inevitably ; unless I happen to be so exclusively interested in form that I can paint anything that has a shape ; or unless

I happen to possess some measure of that queer pantheism, that animistic superstition which made Van Gogh regard the humblest of common objects as being divinely or devilishly alive. "*Crains dans le mur aveugle un regard qui t'épie.*" If a painter can do that, he will be able, like Van Gogh, to make pictures of cabbage fields and the bedrooms of cheap hotels that shall be as wildly dramatic as a Rape of the Sabines.

The contemporary fashion is to admire beyond all others the painter who can concentrate on the formal side of his art and produce pictures which are entirely devoid of literature. Old Renoir's apophthegm, "*Un peintre, voyez-vous, qui a le sentiment du tétou et des fesses, est un homme sauvé,*" is considered by the purists suspiciously latitudinarian. A painter who has the sentiment of the pap and the buttocks is a painter who portrays real models with gusto. Your pure aesthete should only have a feeling for hemispheres, curved lines and surfaces. But this "sentiment of the buttocks" is common to all good painters. It is the lowest common measure of the whole profession. It is possible, like Mantegna, to have a passionate feeling for all that is solid, and at the same time to be a stoic philosopher and a hero-worshipper; possible, with Michelangelo, to have a complete realisation of breasts and also an interest in the soul or, like Rubens, to have a sentiment for human greatness as well as for human rumps. The greater includes the less; great dramatic or reflective painters know everything that the aestheticians who paint geometrical pictures, apples or buttocks know, and a great deal more besides. What they have to say about formal relations, though important, is only a part of what they have to express. The contemporary insistence on form to the exclusion of everything else is an absurdity. So was the older insistence on exact imitation and sentiment to the exclusion of form. There need be no exclusions. In spite of the single name, there are many different kinds of painters, and all of them, with the exception of those who cannot paint and those whose minds are trivial, vulgar and tedious, have a right to exist.

All classifications and theories are made after the event; the facts must first occur before they can be tabulated and methodised. Reversing the historical process, we attack

the facts forearmed with theoretical prejudice. Instead of considering each fact on its own merits, we ask how it fits into the theoretical scheme. At any given moment a number of meritorious facts fail to fit into the fashionable theory and have to be ignored. Thus El Greco's art failed to conform with the ideal of good painting held by Philip the Second and his contemporaries. The Sienese primitives seemed to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries incompetent barbarians. Under the influence of Ruskin, the later nineteenth century contrived to dislike almost all architecture that was not Gothic. And the early twentieth century, under the influence of the French, deplores and ignores, in painting, all that is literary, reflective or dramatic.

In every age theory has caused men to like much that was bad and reject much that was good. The only prejudice that the ideal art critic should have is against the incompetent, the mentally dishonest and the futile. The number of ways in which good pictures can be painted is quite incalculable, depending only on the variability of the human mind. Every good painter invents a new way of painting. Is this man a competent painter? Has he something to say, is he genuine? These are the questions a critic must ask himself. Not, Does he conform with my theory of imitation, or distortion, or moral purity, or significant form?

There is one painter against whom, it seems to me, theoretical prejudice has always most unfairly told. I mean the elder Breughel. Looking at his best paintings I find that I can honestly answer in the affirmative all the questions which a critic may legitimately put himself. He is highly competent aesthetically; he has plenty to say; his mind is curious, interesting and powerful; and he has no false pretensions, is entirely honest. And yet he has never enjoyed the high reputation to which his merits entitle him. This is due, I think, to the fact that his work has never quite squared with any of the various critical theories which since his days have had a vogue in the aesthetic world.

A subtle colourist, a sure and powerful draughtsman, and possessing powers of composition that enable him to marshal the innumerable figures with which his pictures are filled into pleasingly decorative groups (built up, as we see when we try to

analyse his methods of formal arrangement, out of individually rather flat, silhouette-like shapes standing in a succession of receding planes)—Breughel can boast of purely aesthetic merits that ought to endear him even to the strictest sect of the Pharisees. Coated with this pure aesthetic jam the bitter pill of his literature might easily, one would suppose, be swallowed. If Giotto's dalliance with sacred history be forgiven him, why may not Breughel be excused for being an anthropologist and a social philosopher? To which I tentatively answer: Giotto is forgiven, because we have so utterly ceased to believe in Catholic Christianity that we can easily ignore the subject matter of his pictures and concentrate only on their formal qualities; Breughel, on the other hand, is unforgivable because he made comments on humanity that are still interesting to us. From his subject matter we cannot escape; it touches us too closely to be ignored. That is why Breughel is despised by all up-to-date *Kunstforschers*.

And even in the past, when there was no theoretical objection to the mingling of literature and painting, Breughel failed, for another reason, to get his due. He was considered low, gross, a mere comedian, and as such unworthy of serious consideration. Thus, the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, which in these matters may be safely relied on to give the current opinion of a couple of generations ago, informs us, in the eleven lines which it parsimoniously devotes to Peter Breughel that "the subjects of his pictures are chiefly humorous figures, like those of D. Teniers; and if he wants the delicate touch and silvery clearness of that master, he has abundant spirit and comic power."

Whoever wrote these words—and they might have been written by anyone desirous, fifty years ago, of playing for safety and saying the right thing—can never have taken the trouble to look at any of the pictures painted by Breughel when he was a grown and accomplished artist.

In his youth, it is true, he did a great deal of hack work for a dealer who specialised in caricatures and devils in the manner of Hieronymus Bosch. But his later pictures, painted when he had really mastered the secrets of his art, are not comic at all. They are studies of peasant life, they are allegories, they are religious pictures of the most strangely

reflective cast, they are exquisitely poetical landscapes. Breughel died at the height of his powers. But there is enough of his mature work in existence—at Antwerp, at Brussels, at Naples, and above all at Vienna—to expose the fatuity of the classical verdict and exhibit him for what he was : the first landscape painter of his century, the acutest student of manners, and the wonderfully skilful pictorial expounder or suggester of a view of life. It is at Vienna, indeed, that Breughel's art can best be studied in all its aspects. For Vienna possesses practically all his best pictures of whatever kind. The scattered pictures at Antwerp, Brussels, Paris, Naples and elsewhere give one but the faintest notion of Breughel's powers. In the Vienna galleries are collected more than a dozen of his pictures, all belonging to his last and best period. The Tower of Babel, the great Calvary, the Numbering of the People at Bethlehem, the two Winter Landscapes and the Autumn Landscape, the Conversion of Saint Paul, the Battle between the Israelites and the Philistines, the Marriage Feast and the Peasants' Dance—all these admirable works are here. It is on these that he must be judged.

There are four landscapes at Vienna : the Dark Day (January) and Huntsmen in the Snow (February), a November landscape (the Return of the Cattle), and the Numbering of the People at Bethlehem which in spite of its name is little more than a landscape with figures. This last, like the February landscape and the Massacre of the Innocents at Brussels, is a study of snow. Snow scenes lend themselves particularly well to Breughel's style of painting. For a snowy background has the effect of making all dark or coloured objects seen against it appear in the form of very distinct, sharp-edged silhouettes. Breughel does in all his compositions what the snow does in nature. All the objects in his pictures (which are composed in a manner that reminds one very much of the Japanese) are paper-thin silhouettes arranged, plane after plane, like the theatrical scenery in the depth of the stage. Consequently in the painting of snow scenes, where nature starts by imitating his habitual method, he achieves an almost disquieting degree of fundamental realism. Those hunters stepping down over the brow of the hill towards the snowy valley with its frozen ponds are Jack Frost himself and his

crew. The crowds who move about the white streets of Bethlehem have their being in an absolute winter, and those ferocious troopers looting and innocent-hunting in the midst of a Christmas card landscape are part of the very army of winter, and the innocents they kill are the young green shoots of the earth.

Breughel's method is less fundamentally compatible with the snowless landscapes of January and November. The different planes stand apart a little too flatly and distinctly. It needs a softer, bloomier kind of painting to recapture the intimate quality of such scenes as those he portrays in these two pictures. A born painter of Autumn, for example, would have fused the beasts, the men, the trees and the distant mountains into a hazier unity, melting all together, the near and the far, in the rich surface of his paint. Breughel painted too transparently and too flatly to be the perfect interpreter of such landscapes. Still, even in terms of his not entirely suitable convention he has done marvels. The *Autumn Day* is a thing of the most exquisite beauty. Here, as in the more sombrely dramatic *January landscape*, he makes a subtle use of golds and yellows and browns, creating a sober yet luminous harmony of colours. The *November landscape* is entirely placid and serene; but in the *Dark Day* he has staged one of those natural dramas of the sky and earth—a conflict between light and darkness. Light breaks from under clouds along the horizon, shines up from the river in the valley that lies in the middle distance, glitters on the peaks of the mountains. The foreground, which represents the crest of a wooded hill, is dark; and the leafless trees growing on the slopes are black against the sky. These two pictures are the most beautiful sixteenth-century landscapes of which I have any knowledge. They are intensely poetical, yet sober and not excessively picturesque or romantic. Those fearful crags and beetling precipices of which the older painters were so fond do not appear in these examples of Breughel's maturest work.

Breughel's anthropology is as delightful as his nature poetry. He knew his Flemings, knew them intimately, both in their prosperity and during the miserable years of strife of rebellion, of persecution, of war and consequent poverty

which followed the advent of the Reformation in Flanders.

A Fleming himself, and so profoundly and ineradicably a Fleming that he was able to go to Italy, and, like his great countryman in the previous century, Roger van der Weyden, return without the faintest tincture of Italianism—he was perfectly qualified to be the natural historian of the Flemish folk. He exhibits them mostly in those moments of orgiastic gaiety with which they temper the laborious monotony of their daily lives; eating enormously, drinking, uncouthly dancing, indulging in that peculiarly Flemish scatological waggery. The Wedding Feast and the Peasants' Dance, both at Vienna, are superb examples of this anthropological type of painting. Nor must we forget those two curious pictures, the Battle Between Carnival and Lent and the Children's Games. They, too, show us certain aspects of the joyous side of Flemish life. But the view is not of an individual scene, casually seized at its height and reproduced. These two pictures are systematic and encyclopaedic. In one he illustrates all children's games; in the other all the amusements of carnival, with all the forces arrayed on the side of asceticism. In the same way he represents, in his extraordinary Tower of Babel, all the processes of building. These pictures are handbooks of their respective subjects.

Breughel's fondness for generalizing and systematizing is further illustrated in his allegorical pieces. The Triumph of Death, at the Prado, is appalling in its elaboration and completeness. The fantastic "Dulle Griet" at Antwerp is an almost equally elaborate triumph of evil. His illustrations to proverbs and parables belong to the same class. They show him to have been a man profoundly convinced of the reality of evil and of the horrors which this mortal life, not to mention eternity, holds in store for suffering humanity. The world is a horrible place; but in spite of this, or precisely because of this, men and women eat, drink and dance, Carnival tilts against Lent and triumphs, if only for a moment; children play in the streets, people get married in the midst of gross rejoicings.

But of all Breughel's pictures the one most richly suggestive of reflection is not specifically allegorical or systematic. Christ Carrying the Cross is one of his largest canvases, thronged

with small figures rhythmically grouped against a wide and romantic background. The composition is simple, pleasing in itself, and seems to spring out of the subject instead of being imposed on it. So much for pure aesthetics.

Of the Crucifixion and the Carrying of the Cross there are hundreds of representations by the most admirable and diverse masters. But of all that I have ever seen this Calvary of Breughel's is the most suggestive and, dramatically, the most appalling. For all other masters have painted these dreadful scenes from within, so to speak, outwards. For them Christ is the centre, the divine hero of the tragedy ; this is the fact from which they start ; it affects and transforms all the other facts, justifying, in a sense, the horror of the drama and ranging all that surrounds the central figure in an ordered hierarchy of good and evil. Breughel, on the other hand, starts from the outside and works inwards. He represents the scene as it would have appeared to any casual spectator on the road to Golgotha on a certain spring morning in the year 33 A.D. Other artists have pretended to be angels, painting the scene with a knowledge of its significance. But Breughel resolutely remains a human onlooker. What he shows is a crowd of people walking briskly in holiday joyfulness up the slopes of a hill. On the top of the hill, which is seen in the middle distance on the right, are two crosses with thieves fastened to them, and between them a little hole in the ground in which another cross is soon to be planted. Round the crosses on the bare hill top stands a ring of people, who have come out with their picnic baskets to look on at the free entertainment offered by the ministers of justice. Those who have already taken their stand round the crosses are the prudent ones ; in these days we should see them with camp stools and thermos flasks, six hours ahead of time, in the vanguard of the queue for a Melba night at Covent Garden. The less provident or more adventurous people are in the crowd coming up the hill with the third and greatest of the criminals whose cross is to take the place of honour between the other two. In their anxiety not to miss any of the fun on the way up, they forget that they will have to take back seats at the actual place of execution. But it may be, of course, that they have reserved their places up there. At Tyburn one could get an excellent

seat in a private box for half a crown ; with the ticket in one's pocket, one could follow the cart all the way from the prison, arrive with the criminal and yet have a perfect view of the performance. In these later days, when cranky humanitarianism has so far triumphed that hangings take place in private and Mrs. Thompson's screams are not even allowed to be recorded on the radio, we have to be content with reading about executions, not with seeing them. The impresarios who sold seats at Tyburn have been replaced by titled newspaper proprietors who sell juicy descriptions of Tyburn to a prodigiously much larger public. If people were still hanged at Marble Arch, Lord Riddell would be much less rich.

That eager, tremulous, lascivious interest in blood and beastliness which in these more civilised days we can only satisfy at one remove from reality in the pages of our newspapers, was franklier indulged in Breughel's day ; the naïve ingenuous brute in man was less sophisticated, was given longer rope, and joyously barks and wags its tail round the appointed victim. Seen thus, impassively, from the outside, the tragedy does not purge or uplift ; it appals and makes desperate ; or it may even inspire a kind of gruesome mirth. The same situation may often be either tragic or comic, according as it is seen through the eyes of those who suffer or those who look on. (Shift the point of vision a little and Macbeth could be paraphrased as a roaring farce.) Breughel makes a concession to the high tragic convention by placing in the foreground of his picture a little group made up of the holy women weeping and wringing their hands. They stand quite apart from the other figures in the picture and are fundamentally out of harmony with them, being painted in the style of Roger van der Weyden. A little oasis of passionate spirituality, an island of consciousness and comprehension in the midst of the pervading stupidity and brutishness. Why Breughel put them into his picture is difficult to guess ; perhaps for the benefit of the conventionally religious, perhaps out of respect for tradition, perhaps he found his own creation too depressing and added this noble irrelevance to reassure himself.

Poems

By BERTRAM HIGGINS.

Ulysses in Ithaca.

Now that I've come to you by storm
Of geyser-steaming brine and hail,
I find your lips, love, scarcely warm,
And the world's face gone pale.

Barbarian in this leisured land
Of soon-built cities and safe joy—
An import nerveless and unmanned
As our false horse at Troy,

I am pulled passive through quaint streets
For alien ritual with hushed breath,
Whose soul's a crater that secretes
Action and arms for death.

Rapt in its sandy palaces
Your soul is abstract as blown glass,
Where, stripped of depth and fantasies,
My mirrored exploits pass

Like a long caravan beset
By glossy Bedouins of the sun,
Pierced in its tegument of wet
And discrete on a dune.

I watch your strange limbs breathe or move
Noiselessly across clouded rooms,
Less durable than those you wove
On night-unravelled looms.

POEMS

How can I, silvering in such air,
Bequeath firm sinews to this race
Sprung from a dream you would not share
And a misjudged embrace?

Prepare, nymph of the anchored prow,
Your salt-dried breasts for ceaseless foam!
O temperate gods, forget the vow
That made my bourn my home!

The mists of my young breath still float
On billows I must cleave again,
And the blithe voice that launched my boat—
That echo shall remain

Highest of all heartrending cries
From memory's seamews in the wake
Until my landless enterprise
Puts in at the Low Lake.

Now hope's unsprung enchantless ears
Can muffle syrens' tongues in waves,
And, happy with my former fears,
Storm will not leave his caves.

Magic Despair shall make my sails
Furl like a tendril-necked tall swan
Or fill with spiced ethereal gales
Wafted by me alone.

O bitter dungeon whose green hand
Has chained my friends in weeds and cast
Their bloodless images on sand,
Your gates have fallen at last;

Wasting beneath my reckless stare
The porous ocean sheds its oil
Till gods and dolphins choke with air
Upon its bony soil.

The mirage hoisted by black tides
To flash with fins and coral isles
Now bares its marrow—here subsides,
Hissing with all its reptiles.

I see Adventure's bright ensign
Fall-fading on horizon ships . . .
Ah, dip in distance and steep brine,
Forsaken lovely lips !

I've won from that old siege and storm
Whose unseen death-mask was your face,
A kiss too constant to be warm,
A freezing true embrace.

Doom and Steadfastness.

O friend of affliction, freely choose your path !
My mind, mured between the animistic wrath
Of a dead dispensation and dawn's slab
Of solid cold, sighs for a lightning stab
To come quell quickly, here and forever. Kind heart,
Which way will you turn ? What wonder if we part ?
Your vow vouchsafed in hope is vain, for now
Duty-dissolving Doom undoes my vow,
And all our amity, immune from ill,
Sinks at a stroke of suicidal will.
Be bold in bereavement. Beckon up no shade
From the underground where once our youth was played,
Chiding you to companion me in chains,
But let my lost life leap within your veins,
Transfused entire to travel in distress
Still by itself, yet share your steadfastness.

POEMS

The Saint.

(To the L.'s.)

Saint Sosostrian once, while wandering
With his mother, Mirica,
Praying loud and pondering,
Chanced upon the Afric village
Where, in his wild youthful day,
He had committed fornication
With a woman of the Nubian nation.
The artless niggers, when they heard
Of his arrival, left their tillage,
(For his double reputation
Stirred wonder and pride in his own village)
Thronging the sandy market-place
To hear his words of wit and grace.
He, man of the world and saint,
With his saint's sincerity
Fortified his oratory—
Sermon and scandal mixed, to win
By twin appeal to lust and law
Souls that no other bait can draw
In a land of sun and sin.
Over the mob his wild eye ranges
Reminiscential and prophetic,
Seeing God's hand in all pathetic
Aboriginal facial changes
Since his boyhood. So he drivels
Over the past till . . . God's hand shrivels !
There in the crowd, prepared to pray,
Was the woman with whom once he lay.
No Abyssinian damsel with
A dulcimer, he saw before him :
Stained were the lips he kissed, and puffed
The eyes that then adored him.
Courage, Sosostrian !
Motionless as a monument, the saint stood in the sand,
Marvelling at the Lord's high purpose when He led him to that land ;
Not one sin absolving,
In his mind revolving
Delicate problems of conduct between mistresses and sons and
mothers,
Such as have earned the patient thought of Emerson and many
others.
Distracted with these modern worries,
Statuesque, tongue-tied,
He seemed so stern and holy a figure

That all the people cried,
 "O mighty man of heaven, descend,
 From Heaven, which hath no need of thee,
 Soon to our sinful earth, and tend
 Us sinners, numbering seventy-three!"
 Primed for a visionary evasion,
 The saint returned to his duties :
 Baptised and blessed,
 Confirmed, confessed
 All but the woman whom he had possessed.
 Then, raising high his hoarse, God-gifted
 Organ voice of Africa,
 His leman from the crowd he sifted,
 Hastening, nevertheless, to say :
 "I trust you all respect my grave intention
 In singling out this Nubian for a text ;
 My brief career with her calls for no mention
 From this gay world, nor happily, from that next.
 Such trivial divine excesses
 As youth forgetfully dabbles in
 Are but the thousandth of a thousandth
 Fraction of a venial sin !
 No beatific vision can be gained
 Before innumerable cups are drained,
 A man's whole substance wasted, wantons kissed :
 That is the meaning of the Eucharist.
 Does any doubt me ? By the faith that's mine,
 I hereby call upon the desert for a sign !"
 He paused, the people prayed, until
 The tardy desert whirled its sand
 Into a spiral on his head
 And a tame dune at either hand.
 But the persecuted Nubian
 Was not the least impressed :
 Though Heaven itself had proven his theories,
 Pragmatism seemed the best.
 So, in the reverent hush,
 She stirred, the woman who had paid ;
 Contrived to lift a blush
 Above her ardent natural shade,
 And, with small effort, straight she stood,
 A figure of fine womanhood,
 Armed with an excellent brief and sustained by histrionic mood :
 "I cherish no dubiety
 Re the functions of true piety,
 Though you'll need more than piety
 To cope with life's variety.

Nor would I trouble your repose
 But that the Holy Ghost enjoins
 On me the duty to disclose
 This product of your earlier loins :
 Come forth, Khaliba-Cheeta ! ”
 The population stared, the saint
 Blenched, Mirica fainted
 To see the grinning youth who came,
 Shamble-limbed, flesh-tainted
 With the vice that the white man gives to the black
 In fair exchange for the rights of the shack,
 The hold on the gun, position on the fence,
 Herb-coloured calicoes and spheres of influence . . .

Sosostrian lingered in that town no longer,
 But fled precipitately into the desert,
 Feeling the need of mystical communion
 With One of more refinement than plain Nature.
 There he dwelt in a secret rich oasis,
 Nourishing himself on pears and pomegranates
 And all the facilities that goats afforded ;
 And when, after the usual forty days,
 He issued forth rotund, the simple villagers,
 Exclaiming on the miracle of his fasting,
 Once more did ample penance for their sins.

But first, that their state of grace might be known,
 After choosing their text from the end of St. Peter,
 They crucified the Nubian upside down
 And burned Khaliba-Cheeta ;
 Not tarrying in these pious pauses
 But hurrying back to their tillage,
 Happy in the consciousness
 Of having soothed a saint,
 Subsidised his righteousness,
 Relieved his slight embarrassment
 By eradicating its causes—
 Though a stench stayed in the village.

The Visitation of the Hero.

Out of a land where cries of death and birth,
 Rattle and wail unceasing as earth's winds,
 The summoned Hero hailed us and came riding
 With marble face and eyes steadily staring.
 Aware, in thudding hinterlands of æther
 Of snowy hoofs and the heraldic neighings,
 The sky let down a drawbridge of gold rays
 With a block of its own bluestone for a pathway,
 Whence, sunken image of a windy morning,
 He fell expanding, binding with bright shadow
 The bitter-fenced allotments of our myriad islands.
 Here the monistic clamour of the surf
 Sounds its one tone of meaning but no message
 Through limpid days,
 And Memory stakes its claim in wildest nocturnes,
 Deducing tenants from transparent tombs
 Crowded from dawn and dangled in men's minds
 By white webs from the broad breast of the sun.
 These are the Hero's friends, their festival
 Is on blood's daily death and funeral
 When sleep retiring like a tide from under
 Washes our waiting half. The hot corpse laid,
 They break from being lulled on each small shore
 Whose last gesture was lonely and met numbness.
 Their loose-limbs blend, wisps of a resurrection,
 And chuckle in union, reckless of the sad poise
 Of realms relaxing with snatched herbs of hillocks
 With pulp of dusty trees, printless garbage of flowers
 And egoist strays of flesh now netted in abandon—
 A sliding jumble on earth's tilting cable
 Of humble brick-brack to amuse the moon.
 That visiting all-Sky's bride on usual midnights
 Tempers her undress to the heat of stars,
 Declining silver with climatic justice
 On these mid-air events and the visiting Hero,
 Who loathe to begrudge or school his monsters' frolics,
 Considerate as wind, curves then in his communion.
 But now this wonder came with waxing sun

As if our keen need blinded light and fitness
 Or Time reversed the colour of his moods
 Just before mid-day.
 So matching sometimes clever with dense clouds
 The Seasons grapple for an hour of sky,
 And then the red-mouthed ape and the mild gnu
 Mix elegies side by side in the striped air—
 Tremble to see each other's tactful dreams
 Blenching and blanching in that madman's eye.

What eager newfoundland foresees him now
 Whose soul's in the restoration of our sighs ?
 We live arcane, relapsed and numerous
 As parasitic saints on Christ's sick tree,
 Claspng ourselves on sapless recollection
 And falsen than before in a packed semblance.
 I see my failure frozen on my friend's faces
 Hushed to their depths ; an icy badge of sameness
 Binding our brows with irony and silence
 To stem the hæmorrhage of each broken vision.
 We cooled his lightning into type for texts—
 His impulse cowed to minister to three
 Impulsive Fates in mind's plutonian caves,
 Blind baleful weavers of inactive knowledge.
 This was your last endeavour, lost Eurydice !
 —She was the thought first found in twisted shades
 Small and pale, soft-fluttering in fumes.
 We moved to the pit-head, equipped and listening :
 The spiry lamentation breathed our names.
 We were roped down one man, as one man lifted
 Through chasms of fixed fear, through barking darkness,
 The scorched head fainting on our arms' cool fibres . . .
 Expedient against dark, that unison
 Prolonged in day, holds us in inner darkness,
 Come back, twice ghostly, to earth's neutral playground,
 The fading forfeit of old aspiration—
 Far as Eurydice in her gassy jungle
 From Sun redoubling in his unscaled prairies
 Energetic delight, a future harvest.

A Country House.

By DOROTHY EDWARDS.

FROM the day when I first met my wife she has been my first consideration always. It is only fair that I should treat her so because she is young. When I met her she was a mere child with black ringlets down her back and big blue eyes. She put her hair up to get married. Not that I danced attendance on her. That is nonsense. But from the very first moment I saw her I allowed all those barriers and screens that one puts up against people's curiosity to melt away. Nobody can do more than that. It takes many years to close up all the doors to your soul. And then a woman comes along, and at the first sight of her you push them all open, and you become a child again. Nobody can do more than that.

And then at the first sight of a stranger she begins talking about "community of interests" and all that sort of thing. I must tell you we live in the country, a long way from a town, so we have no electric light. It is a disadvantage, but you must pay something for living in the country. It is a big house, too, and carrying lamps and candles from one end of it to another is hard. Not that it worries me. I have lived here since I was born. I can find my way about in the dark. But it is natural that a woman would not like it.

I had thought about it for a long time. Not that I know anything about electrical engineering; but there is a stream running right down the garden, not a very small stream either. Now why not use the water for a little power-station of our own and make our own electricity?

I went up to town and called at the electrician's. They would send someone down to look at it. But they could not send anyone until September. Their man was going for his holidays the next day. He would be away until September. Now I suddenly felt that there was a great hurry. I wanted it done before September. They had no one else they could send, and it would take some time if I decided to have it done.

A COUNTRY HOUSE

I asked them to send for the electrician. I would pay him anything he liked if he would put off his holiday. They sent for him and he came in and listened to my proposal.

At this point I ought to describe his appearance. He was tall, about forty years old. He had blue eyes and grey hair brushed straight up. His hair might have been simply fair, not grey. I cannot remember that now. He had almost a military appearance, only he was shy, reserved and rather prim. His voice was at least an octave deeper than is natural in a speaking voice. He smiled as though he was amused at everyone else's amusement, only this was not contemptuous. Do not think for a moment that I regard this as a melodrama. I do not. I saw at once that he was a nice fellow, something out of the ordinary, not a villain at all.

He smiled when I asked him to put off his vacation. Nothing could be done until he had had a look at the place, and he was perfectly willing to come down that evening to see it. If it were possible to start work at once something could, perhaps, be arranged. I was pleased with this and I invited him to stay the night with us.

At five o'clock he was standing on the office steps with a very small bag, which he carried as if it were too light for him. He climbed into the car and sat in silence during the whole long drive. When we reached the avenue of trees just before we turn in at my gate—although it was still twilight, under the trees it was quite dark, because they are so thick—he said : “ I should imagine this was very dark at night ? ”

“ Yes, as black as pitch,” I said.

“ It would be a good thing to have a light here. It looks dangerous.”

“ No. I don't want one here,” I said, “ nobody uses this road at night but I, and I know it in the dark. Light in the house will be enough.”

I wonder if he thought that unreasonable or not. He was silent again.

We turned in at the gate. My wife came across the lawn to meet us. I do not know how to describe her. That day she had a large white panama hat and a dress with flowers on it. I said before that she had black hair and blue eyes. She is tall too, and she still looks very young.

The electrician, his name was Richardson, stood with his feet close together and bowed from the waist. I told her that I had brought him here to see if it was possible to put in electric light.

"In the house?" she said. "That would be lovely. Is it possible at all?"

"I hope so," said Richardson, in his deep voice. I could see that she was surprised at it.

"We don't know yet," I said, "we must take him to see the stream."

She came with us. The stream runs down by the side of the house, curving a little with the slope of the garden, until it joins the larger stream which flows between the garden wall and the fields. We followed it down, not going round by the paths, but jumping over flower beds and lawns. Richardson looked all the time at the water, except once, when he helped my wife across a border.

"There is enough water," he said, "and I suppose it is fuller than this sometimes?"

"Yes, when it rains," said my wife. "Sometimes it is impossible to cross the stepping stones without getting one's shoes wet."

Now I will tell you where the stepping stones are. Where the stream curves most a wide gravelled path crosses it, and some high stones have been put in the water. When we came down as far as that Richardson said: "This is the place where we could have it. We could put a small engine-house here, and the water could afterwards be carried through pipes to join the stream down below, forming a sort of triangle with the hypotenuse underground."

I asked him if he was certain that it could be done.

"I think so," he said seriously.

My wife smiled at him eagerly.

"I hope the building will not be ugly; it would spoil the garden."

Richardson smiled in the amused way, and answered:

"It will, but it will not be high. We must have it at least half underground, with steps to go down to it. Would it be possible to plant some thick trees round it? Yews, as long as they do not interfere with the wires."

A COUNTRY HOUSE

"Oh, yes, thank you," she said, "I believe we could have that."

Richardson looked about him a bit more, and he took some measurements with a tape measure from his pocket. Then we went back to the house. At dinner I asked him where he meant to spend his holiday.

"I am not sure," he said seriously. "I thought perhaps the Yorkshire moors would be a good place."

"You won't find anything better than this," I said. "Put off your holiday until September."

My wife moved to the door.

"Would you have to stay here during the work?" she asked.

"Or somewhere near here, Madam," he said.

"Yes, of course, here," she said, and walked out of the room. Richardson bowed from the waist again.

We arranged it easily. He would not put it off, but he would make this his holiday. He would bring his motor bike here and explore the country around. He could be here always when there was anything for him to do, and he considered our invitation to him to stay here more than enough compensation for the change of his plans.

Afterwards in the drawing-room he asked my wife if she was fond of music.

"That is what she *is* fond of," I said. "She plays the piano."

What can anyone do with a strange man in the drawing-room but play the piano to him? She played a Chopin nocturne. Now I could watch girls dancing to Chopin's music all day, but to play Chopin to a stranger that you meet for the first time! What must he think of you! I can understand her playing even the nocturnes when she is alone. When one is alone one is in the mood for anything. But to choose to play them when she is meeting some one for the first time. That is simply wrong. Chopin's nights are like days. There is no difference except that they are rounded off. That is nonsense. Night does not round things off, night is a distorter. Those nocturnes come of never having spent his nights alone, of spending them either in an inn or in someone else's bedroom. No! How do I know what Chopin did! But I tell you they

are the result of thinking of darkness as the absence of the sun's light. It is better to think of it as a vapour rising from the depths of the earth and perhaps bringing many things with it.

But he liked it. That is, Richardson liked the nocturne. He asked her to play another. While she turned over the pages I said aloud :

“Night isn't like that. Night is a distorter.”

My wife looked into the darkness outside the window.

Richardson looked at her, then he looked at me in uncertainty. She began to play, and he, for a moment pretending to be apologetic, studied her music with concentration.

Why didn't they ask me what I meant? I could have proved it to them. In any case, it was an interesting point.

She played a lot of Chopin. Then as she came from the piano she said :

“You are fond of music, too. Do you play?”

“No,” he said. “It was my great ambition to be a 'cellist but I never learnt to play it well, and I haven't one now. It is my favourite instrument.”

“It is only the heavy father of a violin,” I said. But I said it only because all that Chopin had annoyed me. I like the 'cello very much.

“I have never liked anything better than the piano,” said my wife. “I am sorry you do not play.”

“He sings,” I said.

He smiled with amusement.

“Do you?” she asked, eagerly.

“Yes,” he said, half bowing from where he sat.

“I knew by your speaking voice,” I said. “Please let us hear you.”

“I will bring some songs with me if you wish it,” he said. “That is very kind of you,” and he leaned back in his chair and cut off all communication with us. We sat in silence until my wife left us. Then we talked a little about the electric light and then went to bed.

The next day the work began. Until the small building was up and the pipes laid from it back to the stream Richardson could do nothing more than see that the measurements were

A COUNTRY HOUSE

right. He carried a small black notebook and kept looking at it and then looking up at us and saying :

"This is no work at all, you know ; it is simply like a holiday."

He brought his motor bike down, but he went for few rides. Most of the time he spent looking at the first few bricks of the building, or crossing and re-crossing the stream over the stepping stones, with no hat on, and his black note-book open in one hand, as though he were making some very serious calculations. I do not suppose he was for a moment.

As I said before, I do not regard this as a melodrama. I do not consider him a villain, but, on the contrary, a nice enough fellow, but it was irritating to me the way he wandered round in a circle looking for something to do.

In the daytime he could look after himself, but in the evening we treated him as a guest.

The second day he was here, after tea, I suggested taking him for a walk. He bowed with one hand behind his back, and he kept it there afterwards. I noticed it particularly. My wife came too. We walked down the garden, Richardson still with his hand behind his back, walking just behind her, talked to her about the work, and he said the same things over twice.

When we got to the bottom of the garden and through the door which opens on the bank of the stream she gave a cry of horror. And I will tell you why. It was because I had had the grass and weeds on the banks cut.

She turned to Richardson.

"I am so sorry," she said, "you should have seen this before it was cut. It was very pretty. What were those white flowers growing on the other side ?"

"Hemlock," I said. "It had to be cut."

"I don't see why," she said. "It is a pity to spoil such a beautiful place for the sake of tidyness." She turned to him petulantly.

Now that is all nonsense. A place must be tidy. There were bulrushes and water lilies as it was. What more must she have ? A lot of weeds dripping down into the water ! There is a difference between garden flowers and weeds. If you want weeds then do not have gardens. And I suppose

I am insensible to beauty because I keep the place cut and trimmed. Nonsense ! Suppose my wife took off her clothes and ran about the garden like a bacchante ! Perhaps I should like it very much, but I would shut her up in her room all the same.

We walked along in silence over the newly-cut grass. It was yellow already with having been left uncut too long. I went first across the bridge, and my two friends who admire Chopin so much came after. We were in the cornfield now, and I will tell you what it is like. There is a little hill just opposite the bridge and the corn grows on top of it and on its slopes. It is a very small hill, but the country around is flat, and from the top of it you can see over the trees a long distance. We began to walk up the path to the top. The corn was cut and stood up in sheaves. That is what I like. When we reached the top Richardson took his hand from behind his back and looked around him. There is a lake a few miles away, and on either side of it the land rises and there are trees. Beyond that again is the sea. And from the hill the sea looks nearer than it is and the lake like a bay. Richardson thought it was a bay. I thought so too when I was a child.

"I did not know the sea was so near," he said.

"It isn't near," I answered. "That is a lake. There are even houses in between it and the sea, only you cannot see them."

He took a deep breath.

"You know it is very kind of you to let me stay here. It is very beautiful. I have not seen a place I like better. I am most grateful. And the work is simply nothing. It is a real holiday."

At this point he fingered the black note-book which stuck out of his pocket.

If things had not happened as they did he might have come down often ; he might have spent his week-ends here. He was not a bad sort of fellow.

He did not want to leave the hill, but my wife did not like walking about on the stubble in her thin shoes. We walked back by the path which leads between a low wall and some small fir trees to the back of the house. I had the path made for her, because she prefers that walk.

A COUNTRY HOUSE

After dinner Richardson sang. His voice was all right, deep like his speaking voice, only not so steady. She played for him, and he stood up at attention, except that, with his right arm bent stiffly at the elbow and pressed to his side, he clutched the lapel of his coat. He sang some Brahms. It was quite nice.

I went to write some letters, and afterwards I walked about in the garden. When I returned they had left the piano and were talking. He was very fond of Strauss. She had not heard the *Alpine* symphony. We were so far from everywhere here.

The time went on. Richardson grew more restless every day. And yet he was lethargic too. He hardly left the house and garden, and he still wandered back and forth by the work. He did not interfere with the men by giving unnecessary orders, but he still studied his note-book as though there were important calculations there. I know all this because I watched him as if he were my brother.

My wife used to go down there to sit sometimes in the mornings. But he hardly spoke to her then. It is natural that a man would not care to talk about music and all that when the men were working in the sun. It was curious how much interest we all took in the little building and the pipes and the water, and yet when we thought of the electric light in the house, which was to be the result, all the romance was gone out of it. This is not simply my experience. It was so with my wife and Richardson too. I know by my own observation of them. The minute the building was finished we went down to see it. Nothing but a yellow brick hut with steps to go down and an opening like the mouth of a letter box in the wall nearest the stream.

"The water is shut off now," said Richardson. "We have to put a grating in it before the water comes through."

There was a hole in the concrete floor too, and from that the pipes would lead back to the stream. The first pipe was there with a big curve in it. It was nice to see it getting on.

After that they dug a ditch and put the pipes down. He helped them to dig.

Every night he sang and my wife played, but I did not always stay in the drawing-room. One night, though, I

remember particularly, he sang a song by Hugo Wolf about a girl whose lover had gone, and while the men and women were binding the corn she went to the top of a hill and the wind played with the ribbon that he had put in her hat. It was something like that ; I have forgotten it. I asked him to sing it again. I suppose they were pleased that I liked something. He sang it.

*an dem Hut mein Rosenband, von seiner Hand
spielet in dem Winde.*

Now I should think that the hill that she climbed in that song was like the hill in our cornfield, and the girl sat there for hours "like one lost in a dream."

The days passed, and everything remained the same except the work, and that went on quickly. We walked about together sometimes. One evening we went again through the door to the little river where the grass had been cut. We were going along the bank talking when we heard a splash and there was a boy swimming in the water. I shouted to him and told him to come out and not swim there again. His white back flashed through the water to a bush on the other side, and he began to dress behind it. When I turned back she said :

"Why did you send him away ? It looked so nice."

"He can go somewhere else to swim," I said.

Richardson said nothing.

"He does no harm here, surely ?" she said.

Bulrushes and water lilies are not enough for her. She must have weeds and naked boys too. And do you think she ever bathed in a river when she was a child, and hid behind a bush when someone was coming ? No, of course not. And does she think the boy wants to be seen bathing ? And if he is not to be seen, when he is here, he might as well go somewhere else.

We never talked about anything except the work, and he talked about music with my wife. They never said anything illuminating on the subject though. It is a funny thing that you can spend days and weeks with a man and never mention anything but water pipes and electricity. But, after all, you can't talk about God and Immortality to a man you hardly know. Anyhow, it is nice to see someone so much interested

A COUNTRY HOUSE

in his work. No. That is nonsense. He was not interested in his work. When the engine came we were enthusiastic and he was as miserable as sin. What business has an electrician to get excited over yellow bricks and water pipes? He was restless. He could not settle to anything. If he read a book, half the time it would be open on his knee and he looking away from it. I noticed him very particularly.

The day before everything was finished and he was to go—he was not waiting to see the light actually put in the rooms—I was chalking out a garden bed just at the bottom of the garden by the door. It is a shady place, and I meant to plant violets there, especially white violets—not in August, of course, but it was better to get it prepared while I thought of it. I heard them coming along on the other side of the wall. She was saying :

“Before I was married I stayed with my music master in London. He had two sons, but no daughters. His wife was very fond of me. That was the happiest time of my life. One of the sons is a first violin now. I went to a symphony concert when we were in London once and saw him play. I don’t know what happened to the other one.”

“Let us sit down here,” said Richardson. I knew there was something wrong with him by his voice, I detected that at once.

I suppose they sat down on the large tree stump outside. They were silent for a moment. I suppose she was looking at the water and he was looking at her. Then he said, beginning as though he were talking to himself, and yet apologising too :

“Please forgive me, I ought not to say it. I have never been to a place which has given me such pleasure as this. I had never noticed scenery or nature much before. When one likes a place it is because one went to it in childhood or something of that sort. But this has been so very beautiful while I have been here. I suppose from the beginning I knew I could not come here again. It is impossible. Forgive me saying so.” His voice became deeper as he went on, I noticed that.

“Oh, but you must come here again,” she said, anxiously. “There is no one here at all, and we have so many tastes in common.”

“No,” he said, “you think I don’t mean it. I walked up and down in the garden just now and I came to a decision. At first I thought I would not speak a word to you, but afterwards I decided it would not make any great difference if I did. People do not change their lives suddenly. That is, they don’t except in literature. And now I feel at peace about it. No harm at all—none. I do not mean that literature is artificial you know, only that it is concerned with different people.”

Now, what word had he spoken that a husband could not listen to? And yet we would have looked very interesting from an aeroplane or from a window in heaven.

And do you suppose she wanted to know what he was talking about? All she said was:

“Oh, but my husband has asked you to come here himself. You must come often and bring your songs. There is no one to talk about music to here. And I cannot go to any concerts, we are so far from everywhere.”

He was silent. They stood up, and I waited for them to come through the door. I suppose nobody could expect me to hide behind a tree so as to cause them no embarrassment. “Excuse me, I was just passing at this moment. Please go on with your pleasant conversation.”

However, they chose to go back by the other way along the bank of the stream.

We spent dinner very pleasantly. Nobody spoke a word. Richardson was not fully aware that we were in the room. He looked at the tablecloth. I did not go away to write letters after dinner. I never left the drawing-room. I suppose no one could expect me to do that. After the music we sat round the empty grate and said nothing, and we went very late to bed.

The next morning, after breakfast, I went up to the flag-staff. If you climb up the steep bank at the left of the house and walk along until you come to a narrow path with trees growing there, you come to a ledge, and the flagstaff has been put there, because it can be seen above the trees. I was standing there disentangling the rope to pull the flag up when he came up to me.

A COUNTRY HOUSE

"What time are you going?" I asked, and pulled out my watch.

"At eleven," he said.

"I suppose you think it funny that I should be putting the flag up on the day that you go?"

"I did not know you had a flagstaff," he said. "I suppose it can be seen even from the sea?"

"Yes."

He was silent, and he looked across at the house.

"Where is my wife?" I asked.

"In the drawing-room, practising."

"I hope you will send in your bill as soon as possible."

"Oh, yes," he said. "It will come from the firm, you know. They pay me. I wanted to walk round the corn field before I go."

I pulled up the flag and fastened the cord.

"I'll come with you," I said.

We walked in silence to the top of the hill, and he stood and looked all round, at the house and at the sea. Taking leave of it, of course.

"In the village down there," I said, "there is a very nice girl called Agnes. She isn't pretty, but she is very nice."

Now Agnes was the name of the girl in the song by Hugo Wolf, but I knew he would not see that. He looked at me in surprise. Then he took out his watch and said he must go. There was no need for that. If you go away on a motor bike why go exactly at eleven? He had to keep himself to a time, that is what it was. We turned to go down the hill.

"I put up the flag because it is my birthday," I said, though that was not true.

He looked at me without listening to what I said.

When we got back to the house his motor bike was standing outside the gate ready. He went into the house to fetch his cap and my wife came out with him. Half way to the gate he turned to her and thanked her. He had never experienced such pleasure in a holiday before. Then he shook hands with me and said nothing.

"Come down to see us often," I said. "Come whenever you like, for week-ends."

“Oh yes,” said my wife, “please come and bring your music.”

He looked embarrassed. I was watching him. I knew he would be. He looked at the ground and mumbled :

“Thank you very much. Good-bye.” Then he turned and went out through the gate, and in a few minutes he drove away under the trees.

She went into the house. She thinks he will come again, call and listen to her play Chopin.

I went to sit down by the engine house. The engine was working, and it throbbed and shivered noisily, while there was hardly any water in the curve of the stream. It has made a great difference to the garden. Up above the flag waved senselessly in the wind.

Petrarch, d'Annunzio, Solitude, and other matters.

A DIALOGUE

BY

ROBERT NICHOLS.

SHADE.—You breathed my name.

READER.—Is it you, Messer Francesco Petrarca? Yes, by the purple mantle and the apple-green leaves of spring laurel twined about the grizzled locks, by the earnest eyes and musical voice, it must be. I scarcely expected to have the good luck to behold you in this narrow house of mine only too closely overhanging one of the most noisome cities in the world. Do not let the real estate boosters get wind of your whereabouts, or they will capitalise on your shy presence.

SHADE.—I come only to those who need me and love my spirit. The gentry you mention have not heard of me and would not love me, for I come to treat with you concerning the book* that lies open before you, my *Solitude*, a word detestable and, indeed, incomprehensible, to them. You smile. But there are traces of tears about your eyes.

READER.—Well there may be. It is but a few days since I thought my lonely self reconciled to Multitude in digesting the work of another humanist, Erasmus, his *Praise of Folly*. I have just discovered I am not old enough to become reconciled to folly.

SHADE.—Do not be too sure you will ever be reconciled. "As one grows older," says Goethe, "the ordeals grow greater." No truer word was ever spoken, and few can better appreciate that truth than myself. What is of importance is not reconciliation, but the manner in which we support the want of it. And perhaps the business of the true poet is precisely this—

* The Life of Solitude, by Francis Petrarch, translated with Introduction and Notes by Jacob Zeitlin, Associate Professor of English in the University of Illinois. University of Illinois Press. An excellent rendering with a lucid and discerning Preface.—R. M. B. N.

to provide us with material suitable to aid us in affecting a reconciliation to life. My poems to Laura abound in sorrows, but they are a record of sorrows which enriched and fortified life, not of miseries which degraded it.

READER.—Milton affords some support to this contention.

SHADE.—“To justify God’s ways to Man,” yes. And so does Goethe, with whom I have had of late much conversation. He avers that the function of poetry is “to make man contented with the world and his condition.”

READER.—Does he say that ? We English do not read him.

SHADE.—How extraordinary ! Montesquieu remarked that the English demand above all things “that a man be at all points a man.” Goethe is most a man of any that have visited this planet. And you assert the English do not read him !

READER.—Forget the English. They read neither Goethe, nor Montesquieu, nor you. They do not even read their own Milton and Shakespeare. They read the sporting, finance, and divorce news. But I am amazed. You speak thus of Goethe with Dante at your elbow ?

SHADE.—I do. Had it been granted me to develop beyond the bounds appointed me, that development would have been rather toward Goethe than Dante. Goethe is at once nearer the Ancients, whom I admired, and the Moderns, whom in my person I foretold. As to Dante, he abides in a place apart, far from the Ancients, from myself, and far from the Moderns.

READER.—I think I understand you. He is the only great poet who has ever shocked me. I must admit I find him extremely unsympathetic to my temperament.

SHADE.—And, therefore, largely incomprehensible. For, as Goethe has observed, we can only appreciate what is akin to us. But we have wandered far from my volume and your distress.

READER.—Ten years ago a friend introduced me to the great proletarian leader of a suffering nation. “Monsieur Vandervelde,” he said, “let me introduce to you a young English poet of profound melancholy and a natural genius for disillusion.” Secretly flattered, I nevertheless rather resented the terms, which seemed to me excessive in implication. I need not have resented them. War could bruise, but not break a spirit which peace has broken. Cast derelict from the battle,

A DIALOGUE

I discovered in Solitude the virtues which even universal murder could not wholly blemish : the hell man had created he could transcend—flowers of pity, of fortitude, of aspiration blossomed amid the blood and flames. To-day among Multitude I comprehend with terrifying clarity the words of Bacon : *Certainly virtue is like precious odours, most fragrant when they are incensed and crushed : for prosperity doth best discover vice, but adversity doth best discover virtue.* That war transformed men into tigers, but this peace has conjured them into swine.

SHADE.—And the same philosopher avers, *Whosoever is out of patience is out of possession of his soul.* Once more seek solitude and it shall return you that possession. It was this possession of the soul for its own sake which I sought, and so doing, I became the First Modern.

READER.—Far be it from me to bandy words with one so eminent, but have you not overlooked the Taoist poets of China, for instance Lu Yun and T'Ao Ch'ien ?

SHADE.—These poets were metaphysical. Lu Yun, singing of "living in retirement," concludes :

*My spirit is tuned to the Spring Season :
At the fall of the year there is autumn in my heart.
Thus imitating cosmic changes
My cottage becomes a Universe.**

The small admixture of the metaphysical in me was the least important part, and the most dissolvent of my true nature. The leaves of the laurel hid my tonsure. To follow St. Augustine required a certain effort of my spirit, which the graceful volubility of Cicero did not demand, since I was primarily an Italian, a rhetorician, a pagan, and a poet.

READER.—Like d'Annunzio.

SHADE.—I am delighted that you observe the similarity. There is an opinion abroad that I was largely a glittering pedant, that the workmanship of my poems surpasses the material ; that there was in me something cold and eupheuistic: It is even asserted that my Laura, in her green dress sprigged with violets and her silver wreath, is a fiction, an extravagance as irritating as that which discovers in the "friend" of your Shakespeare's sonnets cosmic consciousness, or the Established

* Waley's translation. From *One Hundred and Seventy Chinese Poems.*

Church, or the Male Directorate for the Home of Strayed Cats. These are absurdities which the introduction to the volume before you may do something to correct, provided its readers appreciate the slightly submarine humour therein indulged by our professor. Yes, d'Annunzio and I have much in common though I am his superior, as the ancient poets are always superior to the modern.

READER.—Pedant !

SHADE.—Not at all. d'Annunzio is superior to me as a man of action, and perhaps as a rhetorician. I too knew love—

READER.—Has d'Annunzio ever known love ? I doubt it.

SHADE.—Love has always been what the poets have made it ; and forasmuch as the poets of different peoples, times, and climates differ, so does the character of this their fairest and most ambiguous creation. You are of the north and the twentieth century. I and d'Annunzio are of that south which seems, like all that is very ancient, peculiarly tenacious of its character. For you love is perhaps as the pervasive light of that sun you see so seldom ; for us, children of the sun, it is the sun itself. But we are discussing not Northern or Southern ideas of love, but d'Annunzio and the Petrarch that was. My passion for Laura served as an occasion for poetry and became magnified thereby. Nor ought those who are not artists to proclaim d'Annunzio or myself insincere on this account, since the artist is most thoroughly, harmoniously, and lastingly himself when the quill is between his fingers. As I am, so d'Annunzio is voluble, volatile, impressionable. He is concerned with temperament, particularly his own, wherein again he resembles me. The Renaissance cultivated personalities and I mine, even as to-day d'Annunzio, altogether a Renaissance personage, cultivates his, and simultaneously practises the arts of love, of war, and of poetry.

READER.—Not unsuccessfully.

SHADE.—Success, however, is concerned as an end in the case of the art of poetry only. For in love, perhaps, we love most fully the woman we do not gain. Posterity knows not even the name of the girl or girls by whom I had a son and a daughter. All the world has heard of Laura. I envy d'Annunzio his defeat.

A DIALOGUE

READER.—You do ? I am delighted. That defeat has been my secret consolation. Nor did I by any means regret it for Europe's sake.

SHADE.—I am sorry to hear that.

READER.—And yet more did I rejoice for d'Annunzio's. Had he succeeded, he would perhaps have lost something in his own eyes, and certainly he would have lost nearly all in mine, though this last would, I admit, have weighed nothing with him had he known of it.

SHADE.—How lost ? As a man of action or as a poet ?

READER.—Separate them in his case if you can ! Ah, how I envy d'Annunzio at Fiume ! Of all hours lived by any man since this handful of dust, known as I, has perambulated an unquiet planet, those hours of the man d'Annunzio in that beggarly little city I have envied most ! His cause was disgraceful—

SHADE.—By heavens, no !

READER.—Permit me. In my opinion, his cause was disgraceful and his means unjustifiable. But he had the honour of feeling his back to the wall and modern Europe for once united (was she not battling with a poet ?), leagued against him. All hung upon him and him alone. His legions were bound together by the frailest thing in the world—his words. During days of extreme peril and riot, during nights of anguish and of doubt, he came to terms with his spirit. I envy him, how I envy him ! His cause was unworthy, but he suffered greatly for it. In his overthrow he at last possessed all that was heroic in his spirit, and came to know what he was worth.

SHADE.—Be not too sure that he cared so much about the cause. To him, perhaps, the whole episode was but the creation of a poem.

READER.—That was why I challenged you to separate in his case the poet from the man of action.

SHADE.—I did not accept the challenge, for I am well aware that we poets, especially we rhetorical poets, seek any excuse for having life more abundantly, whereof war (like poetry) is only one among several means. In such an episode the poet may be seen living his life as if he were creating a mighty strophe, the design whereof is the pattern the poet imposes on life, its pulse, the pulse of his quickened and im-

perilled blood, its "dying fall" the supreme peripeteia described by the soul in immeasurable triumph or defeat.

READER.—Above all in defeat !

SHADE.—You of the North delight more in defeat than we.

READER.—The Saga heroes are all defeated.

SHADE.—On one point, however, we are entirely agreed. We seek the same epitaph.

READER.—Which is ?

SHADE.—One that few in these days, if I am to judge by their miserable countenances seen afar off, as the figures limp wearily out of Charon's cockle, deserve : *I have lived*.

READER.—Words which cause no little supercilious merri-ment in the East.

SHADE.—I have little acquaintance with the Orient, albeit I have passed pleasant hours with certain of the Chinese poets. The Orient and its ideas appear to me barbarous.

READER.—And coincides with its opinion of us. Yet I would suggest you cultivate the Eastern poets. For you need expect no future shades during the next two centuries to seek your society, if, indeed, they are permitted to encroach upon those groves wherein you wander, a permission that I trust will not be granted.

SHADE.—You seem to be very discontented with your age, yet doubtless you are no exception to the general rule. Every man is born in the age most appropriate to him, or so I have come to think since I crossed the Shadowy Waters.

READER.—A comforting belief when life is over : because forsooth I wore the coat that I lost yesterday it must indubitably have fitted me.

SHADE.—You are sharp tongued.

READER.—I am sharply used.

SHADE.—I would your wits were as sharp as your tongue. Yes, our age is appropriate provided we are resolved to cultivate any aptitude we may possess for using what we find. And that which we would find is always present have we the eyes to discern and the understanding to make it our own. *Thou wast not born*, says Epictetus, *but when the world had need of thee*.

READER.—A very convenient belief. I wish I could share it. But I doubt if any of us are needed by the world. I have yet

A DIALOGUE

to meet the man with whom the world could not dispense without so much as noticing it. This crass world needs nothing that would be of any true service to it.

SHADE.—Well, then, seek your satisfaction in obstinately being what you are. That is a resource fortunately denied to none of us. Nor is it negligible. For me to be in love and to be composing poetry about it, or to be solitary and to be inditing a high and sententious prose thereon were sufficient. I practised the art of enjoying this or that state or activity as an end in itself, and not for the satisfaction of service, or for the sake of any conclusion to which my immersion or activity might conduct me. Therein d'Annunzio and I are at one : both absolute artists. The absolute artist is interested in the presentation to himself and others of What-Is, for the **sake** of the pleasure to be had in creating that presentation, and not for any idea of service, or any conclusion to be drawn from that presentation when complete.

READER.—With that few artists—

SHADE.—I said the absolute artist.

READER.—It is well you limit this brutal statement to absolute artists, a genus which—

SHADE.—I overhear hints of outrage in your voice, and being of what you call this genus, I hasten to add—that is perhaps why the absolute artist is often (and more especially by you Northern peoples) considered immoral. But he is not immoral. He is am-moral as the Nature whence his reverie of presentation springs is am-moral. This is also one of the many reasons why charges of inconsistency, if not of downright insincerity, are preferred against him, when, forsaking the chisel, the quill, or the brush, he sets to work in the direct material of life itself. It has been accounted to me for an inconsistency that, a fervent Republican, I yet associated and delighted to associate with princes. Our d'Annunzio, with the constitution of Fiume, in many ways so revolutionary, among his papers, accepts the title of prince. There is nothing inconsistent in this : we stand together, both absolute artists.

READER.—And pagans.

SHADE.—And pagans. Certainly. Why not ? Have I not declared the leaves of the laurel hid my tonsure ? And I was very willing that they should. I became a priest the more

conveniently to become a pagan, and I believed (with every other pagan) that to the men of stature belong the spoils.

READER.—A belief not uncommon among men of stature, and one, so I have heard tell, to which the prince, who was d'Annunzio, subscribes. I regret that those concerned have displayed so little imagination as to offer him the title of prince, and I consider he degraded himself by consenting to become one. Is it not sufficient to be a poet? I could find it in my heart to wish he had celebrated whatever his principedom was intended to celebrate by returning to that original name that was his before he became d'Annunzio.

SHADE.—You are not an Italian, and in so far as you are a rhetorician (and I begin to suspect you of being one), you are a rhetorician of an inverted habit.

READER.—I am an Englishman. Englishmen like their heroes to be called Smith, Brown, or Robinson.

SHADE.—Do not try to persuade me that this is to be attributed to democratic feeling. They like it because to them the barbarity of nomenclature makes the heroism more remarkable and conspicuous, even as to a foreigner it makes it more outrageous. Northern races do not understand the meaning of what is fitting. It is not *convenable* to be a hero and to be named Robinson. You are the proudest and most perverse people on earth, for you carry the pedantry of your snobbism even into the pantheon. I suspect even so particular a youth as yourself, however you may prate of enjoying the spectacle of d'Annunzio's warlike exploits, for a very similar reason—

READER.—Such as?

SHADE.—That you consider him an amateur at the game of war. You are a lazy nation, and you make the glory of the amateur's occasional triumph an excuse for your laziness.

READER.—No, we are sceptics. We distrust experts.

SHADE.—Which is the very reason why certain of you would like, if you dared, to object to my poetry, and do object to d'Annunzio's prose. You feel that it is too good to be, in any sense of the word, true.

READER.—A certain exuberance of temperament—

SHADE.—Come! You talk like a stay-at-home chattering after an evening at *Lucia*. The fact is you are dazzled, and as you hate the sun in your land of fog, and scarcely believe it is

A DIALOGUE

the sun when you see it, so you dislike every form of brilliance, and when that brilliance is obviously founded on that sort of hard work of which you are quite incapable, why then, you are indeed scandalised !

READER.—There is something in what you say. I must acknowledge I can never quite understand how it is that we, a sceptical nation, are so easily shocked.

SHADE.—Precisely because you are sceptical. It takes faith of the simplest and grandest kind to act as d'Annunzio acts, or write as he writes.

READER.—But you told me not to be too sure that—

SHADE.—A cause and the possession of faith are different matters.

READER.—If I am being English, assuredly you are being Italian.

SHADE.—Perhaps. You will at least acknowledge the presence of the hard work.

READER.—I must. And therein d'Annunzio resembles you.

SHADE.—Certainly. No less than I, d'Annunzio is an incessant worker, an erudite scholar, an impassioned philologist. He, again, is an artist superlatively preoccupied with sonority and pattern. In his novels, too, as in my poems, there are no stories, only states of mind and pictures. I observed that he is my superior as a man of action. I spoke true—for he has succeeded in a procedure after the proper conduct of which, even at Vauclose, I only groped : for him the living of his life has become the fashioning of a work of art. Five years after receiving the Laureate crown in the Capitol, I indited at Vauclose the volume before you. To-day d'Annunzio, five years after the fantastic triumph in defeat of Fiume, issues from his villa this pronouncement, "I have become again the solitary proud artist of nineteen hundred and eleven."

READER.—Amid the jeers of the rabble press.

SHADE.—I was at least spared that ! A humanist, I nonetheless never championed the cause of reading matter for the masses. How could I ? I was a pagan, and, therefore, believed that only a noble man can be virtuous greatly, know wisely, perceive and feel finely. Doubtless your lower and middle classes are industrious and respectable, but they have no notion of greatness, nay, they have even an instinctive hatred of it.

READER.—Accordingly, they see in d'Annunzio only a poseur. They adore Consistency because it accords with the tameness and flatness of their lives and spirit. The unfamiliar scares them. From aeon to aeon the artist advances toward them with outstretched hand—"I am come," cries he, "that you may have life and have it more abundantly!" But they reject him and, should he turn away to live that more ample life for himself and to create it, partly out of envy, partly out of fear, they spit at him. Multitude, I abominate you!

SHADE.—Do not be too hard on Man. He invariably fears what he does not understand. The poet is a chameleon. If it be true, as Napoleon asserted, that "Imagination rules the world," let us remember the Sovereign Imaginative, the Poet, is also the creature of his own imagination. That role which imagination posits to us as suitable to the circumstance of the moment, we assume as if by second nature. The spectacle profoundly disturbs the multitude, which attributes a want of sincerity to this instability, because Multitude hates to doubt, and this spectacle invites it to scepticism. I, too, was a sceptic.

READER.—A somewhat embryonic sceptic.

SHADE.—Owing to my circumstances.

READER.—So our professor would seem to indicate. I admire the perspicacity with which he has demonstrated your relation to Montaigne. I have only one quarrel with him, and I pick it with the utmost reluctance. He appears to me insufficiently to have stressed this point, upon which you have just now insisted, namely, that you were an artist, a rhetorical artist at that, and as such the creature of Imaginations, whether your own or others, becoming by turns troubadour, republican, diplomat, disciple, humanist, according to whether you had your eyes on Laura, your foot upon the Capitol, your ear at the ante-chamber, your finger between the leaves of St. Augustine, or your nose in Quintillian.

SHADE.—Ha! ha! ha!—a devil's advocate, young man! You deny me any personality whatever?

READER.—Far from it. I attribute to you a succession of lives more fabulous than those of the phoenix. You resumed whole civilisations. A man such as yourself is chiefly a minting machine. All his knowledge, moral, philological, and aesthetic,

A DIALOGUE

uniting with the virgin ore of all that he has seen and felt, is transformed in the furnace of his creative intelligence, and issues as a new currency, stamped on the reverse with the character of the age, and on the obverse with the unique personality of the creator.

SHADE.—A brilliant if not very poetical comparison. Young man, my suspicions were well founded—you are quite the rhetorician. Then I have a personality after all.

READER.—I accept your gentle raillery, for my comparison stands. The poet always has a personality—at the moment all his forces focus upon creation.

SHADE.—Only then ?

READER.—Perhaps not only then, though then most of all. When alone and ignorantly browsing among the possibilities of what he next will be, then, too, he exists. Our professor has understood this and strongly emphasised your figure at Vauclose. Indeed, ere I read this, I had not imagined you so pagan a figure.

SHADE.—I had also other aspects. I was alone save for that strange companion Solitude, who restores us to ourselves. And being, then, most myself, the apex of the forward thinking wedge of my age, I became also, as the great poet always is, a prophecy. I wandered whole days upon the sunny mountains and through valleys and in dingles fresh with dew. I thrilled to the silence of a vast forest, and arose at midnight to walk alone under the diffused light of immense heavens, or, accompanied by my shadow, watched the moon lift the crags a visage charged with equivocal dream. Oftentime I remained erect in contemplation, silent and with eyes fixed, communing with myself of many, many things and taking small account of all earthly interests. Unknown to myself, I became the first Romantic.

READER.—You loved silence, you whom any sound but the rippling of the brook, the light breeze among your papers, or the sweet murmur of your own poetry could disturb.

SHADE.—My most fundamental self was, however, pagan. I delighted in suspended judgment. Not seldom did I rehearse to myself the words of the Epicurean poet : *Sed nihil dulcius—*

READER.—Lucretius. How does it go ?

*Sweeter by far on Wisdom's rampired height
To face serene the porches of the light
And thence look down—down on the purblind herd
Seeking and never finding in the night
The road to peace—the peace that all might hold,
But yet is missed by young men and by old,
Lost in the strife for palaces and powers,
The axes, and the lictors and the gold.*

SHADE.—A not wholly inadequate rendering.

READER.—Mallock's. But the possibility to indulge this passion for solitude and suspended judgment is passing. The aeroplane—

VOICE.—Mr. Jas. Brown an' his Jazz Babies will now sing you *Flat-tire Momma, Poppa's gwine to give you Air*, after which the Reverend Judd will lecture on *The World as a Happy Family*.

SHADE.—Horror! What voice is that?

READER.—The radio next door: the voice of Progress itself.

SHADE.—My songs were sung in the streets, but not thus was it that I celebrated Laura. Pleasure then was neither dismal nor vulgar. I regret that I must bid you an altogether instantaneous adieu.

READER.—Alas, not even the companionship of an illus-trious phantom is permitted me, but the solitude I prize must be peopled with voices I detest. O future age wherein do you imagine that you are superior, since the temple from which you have driven the diety is become with your entire approba-tion an habitation for devils?

California, 1925.

Thoughts on the Poetic Discontent.

BY JOHN CROWE RANSOM.

NOT many poets are satisfied with dualism. Mr. Goreham B. Munson, in a remarkable and brilliant analysis, has apparently succeeded in making a dualist out of Mr. Robert Frost, but only by a considerable simplification of Mr. Frost's mind, which may or may not be relished by the owner.

A dualist is a practical man whose mind has no philosophical quality. It may be that we begin our intellectual lives as dualists, but under the logic of experience (if our minds entertain the logical categories) we soon find that the largest problem in our lives is to effect an escape from dualism. The dualist sees himself as one, and the objective world as another ; this world is not sympathetic, not even sentient, but still fairly plastic to his will, and capable of being made by hard work to minister to his happiness : a wilderness which may be transformed into a garden, a habitat which has the makings of a home. His problem is purely the physical one : the application of force at the point where it will do the most good.

Philosophy and metaphysics take their rise most naturally when one perceives that the object, which is the world, is too formidable to be controlled altogether by the subject, which is oneself. Defeat humbles the proud spirit of a mortal. He cannot impose his will upon Nature, and self-respect will not permit him to deceive himself through the illusion of work, the debauchery of "practical" life. Insisting upon his own independence, he is forced to conclude that his personal identity is a tiny thing fighting a precarious and inevitably a losing fight against annihilation by superior forces. Then he consents to surrender the idea of his own dominating personality in exchange for the more tenable idea that he is in some manner related by ties of creation to the world, and entitled to some share in the general patrimony. The second step in his intellectual career is to discover somehow this community. It is a mystical community, capable of a great

variety of definitions. So he finds God appointing to Nature and to himself appropriate places in a system where not a sparrow falls without effect and the hairs of his own head are numbered. So he is quick to note every sign of understanding on Nature's part, and his songs are filled with "pathetic fallacies." He is persistently trying to escape from an isolation which he cannot endure.

These efforts may or may not bring contentment. The romantic constructions of his mysticism are generally obnoxious to the sober observations of his science, and frequently they fall. The romantic poet comes to the point of puncturing his own illusions, objecting to his own romantic treatment of Nature, and cancelling the line which his own creative fancy has projected. He has advanced at this point to a third position which is later and further—though not all would say higher—than the position he has just vacated. Certainly it is not merely a return to his first position, though it is an affirmation of dualism. For too much history has intervened, he is a dualist with a difference—reluctant, speculative, sophisticated rather than ingenuous, and richer by all the pathetic fallacies he has ever entertained. There is a naïve, unqualified, strictly-business sort of dualism, and there is a matured and informed dualism which though critical is also romantic and poetical—and his is now the latter. It may be that most poetry is composed wholly from the point of view of the second, the purely romantic position. Nearly all the poetry of the Nineteenth Century, for example; Byron returned in great bitterness to dualism, but Wordsworth, Shelley, Tennyson, and Browning continued indefinitely (with few lapses) to find sufficiency in their romantic escapes. But the earlier and greater poets (Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Donne, Milton) along with or following their own share of lovely romantic adventures, turned back to the stubborn fact of dualism with a mellow wisdom which we may call irony.

Irony may be regarded as the ultimate mode of the great minds—it presupposes the others. It implies first of all an honourable and strenuous period of romantic creation; it implies then a rejection of the romantic forms and formulas; but this rejection is so unwilling, and in its statements there lingers so much of the music and colour and romantic mystery

which is perhaps the absolute poetry, and this statement is attended by such a disarming rueful comic sense of the poet's own betrayal, that the fruit of it is wisdom and not bitterness, poetry and not prose, health and not suicide. Irony is the rarest of the states of mind, because it is the most inclusive ; the whole mind has been active in arriving at it, both creation and criticism, both poetry and science. But this brief description is ridiculously inadequate for what is both exquisite and intricate.

Mr. Frost's poetry is anything but pretentious, it is trim and easy, and sometimes apparently trifling, yet it contains plenty of this irony. It is modern in one of the common senses of modern : its spirit transcends the Nineteenth Century mind and goes back to further places in the English tradition for its adult affiliations. It is immensely metaphysical, as Mr. Munson does not seem to admit. When this poet sees the bent birches in the wood, he "likes to think a boy's been swinging them," a hypothesis which would immediately put man and nature into a sodality of merry play. But he is too sceptical to believe that : he is forced to consider that ice storms have bent the birches, and thereupon his romantic impulse, baffled but not yet defeated, takes a new tack and begins to personalise the trees, imagined under their ice-coating. This is not dualism. Whenever he dwells on Nature, he is the same ; as when he finds the rotting timbers attempting to warm the forest with the "slow smokeless burning of decay." It would indeed seem that Nature never otherwise puts in an appearance in human art—whether poetry or painting. Always the natural processes are personalised, and art consoles us with its implication of far-flung analogies between our order and the natural order. Mr. Frost is more than ordinarily delicate in making this implication. And sometimes he is at pains to deny the truth of the more obvious implication which we would like to make. We would like to believe that the phoebes were sorrowful when the master's house burned, but he assures us they were not :—

One had to be versed in country things

Not to believe the phoebes wept.

This is irony, and rather brutal if salutary. But like all inveterate poets, he commits this irony in a context sprinkled with sly romanticisms.

The Reminiscences of Mme. F. M. Dostoevsky.

TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN BY S. S. KOTELIANSKY.

DOSTOEVSKY'S TWO VISITS TO OUR HOUSE.

SO the happy time passed, and dull days came to me. During the last month I had got used to hurrying cheerfully to my work, to meeting Dostoevsky with joy, and to carrying on our animated conversations, so that now it had all become necessary to me. All my former habitual occupations lost their interest for me, and seemed to me empty and futile. Even the promise of Dostoevsky's visit did not give me any joy; on the contrary, it weighed heavily on me, for I realised that neither my good mother nor myself could be interesting company for such a talented and clever man. If interesting conversations had taken place between Dostoevsky and myself, it was due, I thought, to the fact that they turned on a subject which occupied us both. But now Dostoevsky would come to us as a visitor, who was to be "entertained." I began thinking of subjects for our talks on the evening of his visit. I am afraid that the impression of a wearisome journey to such a remote place as we lived in, and of a dull evening spent in our company, would efface in so impressionable a man as Dostoevsky the memory of our previous meetings, and that he would resent being burdened with such a tedious acquaintance. Longing to see Dostoevsky, I was, however, quite willing that he should forget his promise and not come to us.

But, being a person very much alive, I tried to occupy myself and to distract my gloomy mood. I went off to my sister's for the day, played with her child, and in the evening told her and her husband of my work and of my visits to Dostoevsky during the whole of October. Working in the afternoons with Dostoevsky and copying out in the evenings,

REMINISCENCES OF MME. F. M. DOSTOEVSKY

I had little time left, and could only see my sister now and then by snatches ; and, therefore, I had many stories to tell, the more so as she, curious to know all about Dostoevsky, asked a good many questions. When I had answered her questions, my sister remarked : " You are wrong in getting infatuated with Dostoevsky. Indeed, my dear Netochka, your dreams cannot be realised, and the Lord be praised for it ; particularly as he is so ill, and so burdened with debts ! "

I replied hotly that I was not " infatuated with Dostoevsky," that I did not dream of anything in particular, but that I was glad to talk to a clever and talented man, and that I was grateful to him for his constant kindness and attention to me.

On my way home I turned over in my head what my sister had said to me, and I asked myself : " Am I really infatuated with Dostoevsky ? Is it indeed the beginning of love ? If so, it is a mad idea ! . . . No ; evidently my sister has exaggerated ! "

Next day I went to the shorthand lesson. At school I was told that the doctor had forbidden Olkhin, in view of his illness, to go out of doors ; and that Olkhin had asked his pupils to come to his house. I went there. Olkhin congratulated me on the successful completion of my work. Dostoevsky had written to thank him for recommending a shorthand writer. Without my assistance, he said, he could not have managed to finish the work in time. He added that he had found working with the help of shorthand quite convenient, and he hoped to use it in the future. Olkhin said that he was satisfied with this opinion on the first pupil of his who had undertaken successfully independent work. I gave Olkhin five roubles, the stipulated 10 per cent. of my salary, and I gave his children two pounds of sweets.

To my great surprise, I noticed a certain feeling of hostility towards me on the part of my colleagues. Evidently, most of them considered themselves quite competent in shorthand and were hurt by the preference shown to me. Miss Alexandra I., as the boldest, made it quite clear to me, and declared rather sharply that she would *demand* the next work that came in, and would not give it up to anyone. I assured her that I made no claim on future work ; that I rather wished to go on with my studies so as to catch up my colleagues. She had just

heard from me about Dostoevsky's coming visit, and she announced that she would come to me on Thursday for the whole evening. Apart from her desire to make the acquaintance of the famous novelist, she was going "to ask Doestoevsky to find work for her either as a shorthand writer or as a translator. He knew all the reviews and with his introduction she could get work anywhere." Her contemplated visit was terribly unpleasant to me. Dostoevsky would not have only to spend a tedious evening with us, but, thanks to Alexandra's insistence, he would also have to take upon himself the business of finding work for her. And besides (I must confess) I was afraid that Alexandra, with her cleverness and audacity, would produce on Dostoevsky a too favourable impression, as compared with me, and somehow I did not desire this. Added to which, my desire to see Dostoevsky again and to talk to him was becoming more ardent every day, and it seemed to me that the talkative Alexandra would spoil our conversation. But how to get rid of her, seeing she had invited herself? I thought for a long while and was greatly worried about it, and then I decided on a feminine stratagem: to call on her on Thursday morning and to tell her that Dostoevsky had paid us his visit the previous night, on Wednesday, and so was not coming on Thursday. That little lie was disgusting to me, but what could I do if I feared her rivalry so much?

On Thursday I bought excellent pears, of the sort Dostoevsky liked, and various other things with which he used sometimes to treat me. I arranged the tea-table, and at seven o'clock I began waiting for him. It struck half past, then eight o'clock, but Dostoevsky did not come; and I decided that he had either forgotten or changed his mind. At half past eight he arrived. I met him with the question: "How did you manage to find us?"

"That is all right," Dostoevsky replied. "You speak as if you were sorry that I had found you. And I have been trying to find your house ever since seven o'clock; I have driven round and round. Everyone knows that there is a Kostromskaia Street, but how to get there no one could tell. So that I drove about enquiring in all the little shops. At last I found a kind fellow who stood on the step of the cab and showed the cabman where to drive."

My mother came in and I introduced Dostoevsky to her. He kissed her hand gallantly and told her that he was greatly obliged to me for my help with his work. While mother was preparing the tea, Dostoevsky told me of the troubles he had met with in delivering the novel. Stellovsky was not at home, he had left for the country, and his people could not say when he would return. Then Dostoevsky took the manuscript to Stellovsky's office, but the manager flatly refused to accept the novel, as he had had no instruction or order from his employer to that effect. To the Notary Public Dostoevsky came too late, and the office was closed ; at the district police there were no chiefs present in the afternoon, and he was told to call later on. He spent the day in anxiety, and only at ten o'clock in the evening he managed to deposit the manuscript with the inspector of the police, and received a formal receipt. And Dostoevsky took it out of his pocket and showed it to me.

We sat down to tea and began talking as pleasantly and unrestrainedly as ever. The topics of conversation I had prepared had to be put aside, so many new and interesting ones had come up. Dostoevsky quite fascinated my mother, who was so shy of the "famous author." Justice must be done to Dostoevsky, he knew how to "fascinate" people. He could be enchanting, and many a time afterwards I saw people who were even prejudiced against him fall under his influence and charm.

We began talking of how he had passed the last four days. He was having a rest, and was going to rest for another week, and then he would start on the third part of *Crime and Punishment*. "I want to ask your assistance, my good Anna Gregorievna," he said to me. "I found it so easy a way of working that I am going to dictate my further writings, and I believe you will not refuse to be my collaborator." I replied that I should be pleased to help him, but I wondered how Olkhin would regard it, if I was to take on fresh work, which he had perhaps intended to give to some other pupil of his. "But I have got used already to your way of working, and am perfectly satisfied with it. It would be strange if Olkhin wished to recommend someone else whom I do not know, and who may not suit me. But perhaps you yourself do not want to work with me, then, of course, I shan't insist." Dostoevsky

THE CALENDAR

was obviously annoyed that I had not agreed at once. I began saying that Olkhin would probably find no objections to my continuing to work for Dostoevsky, but as a mere matter of politeness I must ask him. And then I told Dostoevsky that many of my colleagues were looking askance at me for the preference shown me by Olkhin, and one lady had even made a few biting remarks on the subject.

"Who dared do that?" Dostoevsky said. "A young lady, Alexandra I., but I have revenged myself on her by not introducing her to you." And I told him of my "feminine stratagem." "Why did you do it?" he asked.

"I was afraid she would make too favourable an impression on you" I had to confess, "and also I wanted to talk to you, and to ask you many things, and I should hardly have been able to do it in the presence of a young lady unknown to you."

Dostoevsky was evidently pleased with my confession.

About eleven o'clock Dostoevsky said good-bye, and took my word that at the next lesson, on Monday, I would talk over the matter with Olkhin, and let him know the result. We parted on the most friendly terms, and I returned to the dining room quite enchanted with an evening marked by such animation and friendliness. But ten minutes later our maid came in and told us of an unpleasant incident. The cabman whom Dostoevsky had engaged for the evening had left his cab for a few minutes to go into a shop. While he was away the cushion of the seat had been stolen. The cabman was in despair, saying that his employer would deduct five roubles from his wages, but Dostoevsky promised to pay him the money.

I was so grieved and upset. It seemed to me that that annoying incident would affect Dostoevsky's attitude to us, and that he would no longer want to come to see us, at such a remote place, where he could be robbed, seeing that his cabman had been robbed. At the thought that the impression of that wonderfully spent evening might be effaced by this annoying incident, I almost cried.

The sixth of November was a Sunday, and I was to go to a birthday party given by my godmother. She lived a long way off, and I began to make ready quite early. To pass the time, I sat down to play the piano, and did not hear the bell ring ;

REMINISCENCES OF MME. F. M. DOSTOEVSKY

but hearing steps in the next room, I guessed that someone must have called. I looked round and suddenly saw Dostoevsky standing in the doorway. I instantly shut the piano and walked towards him. "You know," he said, "I have been missing you all this time, and this morning I was wondering whether I should come to see you or not. Would it be convenient? Would not your mother and yourself consider my speedy visit too strange: he was here on Thursday, and he comes again on Sunday? Well, I decided after all to come to-day, and, as you see, I am here!" I said that mother and I were not society ladies, and that we were glad to see him. But this time there was no animated conversation: I only answered Dostoevsky's questions. I was annoyed that the drawing room was not sufficiently heated, and that it was very cold. Dostoevsky observed: "How cold it is here to-day, and how cold you yourself are to-day."- I was also somewhat vexed that, owing to Dostoevsky's visit, I should be rather late for my godmother's.

Seeing me in a bright silk dress, Dostoevsky asked if I was going out. Learning that my godmother lived near Alarchin Bridge, Dostoevsky suggested that he should take me there in his cab. On our way, at some turning, he put his arm round my waist to support me. But, as a girl of the sixties, I had a prejudice against all such marks of attention as the kissing of a woman's hands or the putting of an arm round her waist in helping her to get out of a cab. I said to Dostoevsky, "Please do not trouble: I shall not fall out." Dostoevsky was hurt by my refusing such a trifling service, and said, "How delighted I should be if you *did* fall out!" I burst out laughing, and peace was restored. All the time we talked cheerfully. Saying good-bye to me, Dostoevsky grasped my hand and made me promise that I would come to him on Tuesday to talk over the work on *Crime and Punishment*.

Anna Gregorievna Snitkin, as seen from the first part of her Reminiscences, published in The Calendar, became Dostoevsky's stenographer in October 1866. In November Dostoevsky proposed to her, and they were married on February 15, 1867. Two months after their marriage, on April 14, 1867, the couple left for abroad, where they remained until the spring of 1871. During those years abroad Dostoevsky wrote "The Idiot" (1867-8), "The Eternal Husband" (1870), "The Devils" (1871),

The following chapters are taken from the original Russian volume "Reminiscences of Mme. Dostoevsky" just published (Moscow, 1925).

THE CALENDAR

FIODOR'S LAST GAME AT ROULETTE (1871).

Fiodor so often spoke of the certain "ruin" of his talent, if we remained any longer abroad, and was so tormented by the thought that he would not be able to keep his family, that as I listened to him I, too, was driven to despair. To relieve his anxious mood and to disperse his gloomy thoughts, which prevented him from concentrating on his work, I had recourse to the device which always helped to distract his mood and to amuse him. As we possessed then about three hundred thalers, I said that it would be worth while to try once more our luck at roulette; I pointed out that as he had occasionally happened to win, there was no reason why we should not hope that our luck would turn this time, and so on. I certainly did not entertain any hope of his winning at roulette, and I also was very sorry to part with a hundred thalers, which it was necessary to sacrifice, but I knew by the experience of his former visits to the tables that, after receiving new and exciting impressions, after satisfying his craving for risk, for gambling, Fiodor would return home calmed, and realising the futility of his hopes of winning at the tables, would sit down with renewed strength to his novel, and in a couple of weeks would make good his losses. My idea of his going to play roulette pleased my husband very much, and he did not oppose it. Taking with him 120 thalers and stipulating, if he lost them, that I should send him money for his return fare, he left for Wiesbaden, where he stayed for a week. As I had supposed, his playing resulted disastrously, and his travelling expenses included, Fiodor spent 180 thalers—quite a considerable sum of money in our circumstances. But the cruel torments which he experienced during that week, as he blamed himself for robbing me and our child, had such an effect upon him that he decided *never* again in his life to play roulette. And this is what my husband wrote me on April 28, 1871: "A great thing has happened to me; the filthy fancy, which has *tormented* me for ten years (or truer, since the death of my brother, when I found myself suddenly crushed by debts) has vanished. I kept on dreaming of winning; I dreamt seriously, passionately. Now it is all over and finished. This was actually the *last* time. Do you believe me, Anya,

REMINISCENCES OF MME. F. M. DOSTOEVSKY

that now my hands are untied ? Gambling was a tie on me : but now I shall think of work and shall not dream of gambling for nights on end as I used to do."

I, of course, could not all at once believe in such a great happiness as Fiodor's indifference to roulette. Surely he had promised me not to play so many times before, and yet he had not found the strength to keep his word. But this time the happiness was realised, and indeed that was the *last* time he played roulette. Later on, during his travels abroad (in 1874, 1875, 1876, 1879) Fiodor never once went to a casino. It is true that roulette was soon forbidden in Baden, but roulette tables were to be found in Saxony and in Monte Carlo. The distance would not have prevented my husband from going there, if he had wished to play. But he was no longer drawn to it. It was as though Fiodor's "fancy" of winning at roulette was a sort of diabolical suggestion or disease, of which he suddenly and for ever cured himself. He returned from Wiesbaden cheerful and calm, and immediately sat down to the continuation of his novel *The Devils*. He foresaw that our going back to Russia, settling in a new place and the expected increase of our family would not allow him to do much work there. All my husband's thoughts were turned to the new period opening before us, and he speculated on how he would find his old friends and relations, who, according to him, might have changed considerably in the last four years. In himself he was conscious of a certain definite change of views and convictions.

(To be continued)

The Returning Hero.

By EDGELL RICKWORD.

THE representation of the Hero, and of the heroic in action, is the achievement towards which great poetry has always moved. Is it possible, in the absence of pathetic elements from the Universe, as we see it now, to project such a figure? Perhaps, for the purposes of this metaphysical poetry, the anthropomorphic is obsolete.

Mr. Wyndham Lewis suggests that there is a similar hold-up in the plastic arts :

“As already his body in no way indicates the scope of his personal existence (as the bear’s or the barnacle’s indicates theirs) it cannot any more in pictorial art be used as his effective delimitation or sign.”

It was with the invention of language that man’s capacity outgrew his physical form, and in poetry we find continually the purpose to represent him as other than he looks ; fundamentally, as more powerful than he is. Wistful literature is simply this desire turned upside down (as certain Orientals will say, “Oh, what a beautiful child !” and in parenthesis, “The ugly little brat,” to deceive any maleficent, jealous spirit that may be eavesdropping), primarily under the influence of christian ethics. But, at bottom, creation is the attributing to a suitable figure of extraordinary powers our super-animal vitality demands, which are inhibited from physical expression under present biological conditions. From Ulysses to Don Juan and Hardy’s Napoleon this mechanics holds good, only with the de-humanization of nature it becomes more and more difficult to represent the vehicles of power in concrete forms. Hardy’s Spirits share the modern fate. In the poignancy of the actual fables there is nothing to choose between the Odyssey and the Dynasts. Where are we to find, or how tap, that immense fertility of invention which makes the ancient poem so eminently superior ?

THE RETURNING HERO

We can at least be sure that even if the *Odyssey* were *composed* by one man, the labour of *creation* was by no means his alone. His labour was an æsthetic choice out of the mass of folk-imagination, so that most of his energy was spent simply in arrangement, to which a very great part of art may be reduced. The trouble for our modern poets is not any lack of sensibility or technical gifts, which several possess in high degree, but the necessity of creating entire any mythology they may want to use. The only living mythology is that of the nursery, and though one or two poets have relapsed on this, the result cannot deeply affect a healthy adult community. Since poetry should give the illusion of control over circumstance, in one obvious activity these childhood-fantasies baulk us—in the realisation of sex.

As far as the texture of verse is concerned, the actual descriptive imagery, the modern poet could be very well off. The sciences, industry and engineering, the habitual activities of common life, are all waiting to be drawn from, and provide a variety of material not surpassed by any period. The effort which still seems to hang fire is that of conceiving the poem itself in a modern metaphor, as Marlowe seized on the broad-sheet reports of a case of German charlatanism to embody his lust for absolute power. In this he was helped by the race consciousness, or sub-consciousness, and we must look to this elaborately grotesque tailor of deep-seated desires to provide the costumes for our Hero and his Antagonist. It is none of the poet's business (the attempt is fatal to his art) to supply the Cosmos with mask and cod-piece.

The literature of disillusionment is reaching the last stage ; it is becoming popular with the reading-public. Mr. Strachey and Mr. Huxley have replaced Ruskin and Carlyle. No doubt, too, all young men of poetic ambition have their version of *The Waste Land* in their wash-stand drawer. If this is not quite the same thing as popularity it means at least that Mr. Eliot's inspiration was not merely personal ; in its coarser manifestations, if not in its ultimate delicacy, it tuned in with an emotion common to the best spirit of the age, a fastidious and anguished rejection of the various forms of satisfaction offered by the Spirit of Historical Culture. The passion for sophistication is only one of the forces of life. The determina-

THE CALENDAR

tion not to be fooled is, a young Frenchman said, the disease of our time. But that is no reason for taking the first turning back to divine simplicity. The hefty heroism of Mr. Masfield's narratives is meretricious. The stoicism of Mr. Eliot's middle-aged lover is as tense heroics as the material of his art will bear.

Though we are not likely to cut any more ideals for a good many years, being hardly convalescent from the wholesale extractions of the last century, we cannot imagine the poets remaining content to cultivate the drugget-fields of genteel discontent. A Hero would seem to be due, an exhaustively disillusioned Hero (we could not put up with another new creed) who has yet so much vitality that his thoughts seize all sorts of analogies between apparently unrelated objects and so create an unbased but self-consistent, humorous universe for himself. The form of him is naturally still in question, but we can be pretty sure that he will not be a Watts horseman in shining armour. Possibly he will be preceded (I should say that he is being preceded) by some tumbling, flour-faced harbingers to the progress (for we cannot grow serious all at once) just as the death-facing wire-walker in the circus is led into the ring by clowns who mime his tragedy. Perhaps the Hero will be one of these loons himself, for the death-defying gesture is a demoded luxury in the modern State. So long as the social mind has no coherent expression like that given it by a super-natural explanation of the Universe, the fantastic and the comic, disintegrating forces, will continue the most reputable of styles. They need by no means be inimical to heroic poetry, to which not dignity is essential, but a conception of power: and the further this can be removed from conventional erotic, ethical, or other social values, and the more deeply it can be resolved into its abstract elements, a diagram or skeleton of impulses (like the bare tremendous Sign of the Hero of the Dance of Death), the nearer it will approach a reality underlying the surviving fabric of the old culture.

Reviews.

THE IDEA OF GREAT POETRY. By LASCELLES ABERCROMBIE. Secker. 6s.

It has been Mr. Abercrombie's intention in the five lectures here reprinted simply "to enquire what *are* the qualities most noticeable in the poetry which has, as a matter of acknowledged fact, been recognised as great." As was to be expected of a critic so sensitive to poetry, he has written much in appreciation of certain great poets—Dante, Shakespeare, Milton and Wordsworth—and has occasionally been original in his praise, but he has done little to make clear the main thesis of his book. He fully realised the chief difficulty which presents itself in such a discussion when he wrote "Too often the poetry which is accepted as great has been praised for its ideas, its passions, its characterisation, without any appreciable regard for the conditions which enable these (or any other) qualities to exist *as poetry*." To obviate this he adds that, he hopes "it will be allowed, during the later stages of our discussion, that nothing which is there said to make for *greatness* has been admitted except under the conditions which make it *poetry*, though these conditions may not be expressly mentioned: for they will, in fact, have been mentioned once and for all as the foundations of everything else." With this proviso much of what Mr. Abercrombie says may be accepted, but it is only in continually showing its truth that his book would be of value.

It is, indeed, not at all clear what Mr. Abercrombie means by "great," for he speaks of the *Decameron* as "one of the first poems in the world" when he is actually concerned with showing that it is not great. Or of Wordsworth he says, "What we miss in him is the supremely great *poem*," and yet of the *Ode on the Intimations of Immortality* that it is "the height of modern poetic art in English." If then, as it would appear, poetry does not depend on greatness for its pre-eminence *qua* poetry, it is important to show if, or in what degree, the poems chosen to illustrate greatness are also great poetry. But Mr. Abercrombie when he is writing of *Paradise Lost*, or the *Iliad*, or *Hamlet* says little of their poetry: much of what he says would be equally applicable to *War and Peace* or *Moby Dick*. What he is really doing is to discuss greatness and not great poetry, and this confusion of intention leads to a confused kind of criticism, for it tends always to obscure the value of craftsmanship—the first condition of poetry for the critic.

There is poetry and non-poetry—there is good poetry, but there is no point at which it breaks off into great poetry. It is much more satisfactory to base the scale of values on subject matter, but this point of view Mr. Abercrombie has only hinted at. When he makes a distinction between the poetry of *experience* and the poetry of *escape*, he is much nearer the root of the matter, but he only glances at this distinction.

The fault of such an attitude towards the critical function as Mr. Abercrombie exploits is particularly noticeable in one instance. He says of the great range of matter in *The Dynasts*, "and as this is compacted into tremendous unity of final impression by a singularly potent idea of life, the result is a poem which can only be compared, and will only be compared by the criticism of the future, with the great poems of Europe": and later, "perhaps no better instance could be found of the greatness of poetry coming from the vigorous mastery of an idea over the whole unruly fact of life." It is this insistence on vastness of subject instead of perfection of expression as the criterion of poetry which tends to weaken criticism, and it is this attitude towards poetry which Mr. Abercrombie stresses.

There are, however, other causes for the disappointing effect of the book. The language throughout is at a high tension of romantic eulogy, so that unless the reader enter fully into Mr. Abercrombie's enthusiasms the questions at stake will frequently be obscured by rodomontade. One feels with Johnson that, "We must confess the faults of our favourite, to gain credit to our praise of his excellencies. He that claims, either in himself or for another, the honours of perfection will surely injure the reputation he designs to assist." This attitude of sustained admiration is deadening: the more so that Mr. Abercrombie, by setting forth his point of view in terms of positive achievement, does not attempt to make his criticism applicable to the conditions of modern poetry.

DOUGLAS GARMAN.

ASHE OF RINGS. By MARY BUTTS. Three Mountains Press: Paris, 3\$.

Miss Butts is a short-story writer of ability; in "Ashe of Rings," she essays the novel with much the same technique as she used for the short story. This raises the question of technique. A short digression is, therefore, necessary.

By technique is generally meant the various means which a writer uses to express his vision. As such it is in every period a collective as well as an individual thing; the expression on the one hand, of what people call the spirit of the age, and, on the other, of the personality of the writer. And as in the political realm, as indeed in human life generally, there is here, too, a conflict between

REVIEWS

the individual and the mass, between the *Zeit Geist* which, if it could, would make us impersonal and undistinguishable vehicles of its expression, and ourselves as individuals desiring absolute utterance for our personal visions. No absolute freedom of this kind exists, in literature or in life, as we know ; and so the writer who tries to escape the spirit of the age (an attempt which must always be hopeless in any case) is likely to attain less freedom than the one who, recognising it, wrestles with it for the prize of his personality. For the spirit of the age is not only a thing which limits the writer's expression (though that it does so we can recognise when we look back even upon such a recent era as the 'nineties) ; it is also the thing which gives most immediately what life may reside in what he says. But that life, it almost appears, can only be tapped at its living source, as Mr. Joyce tapped it in "Ulysses," when one has struggled against the spirit of the age ; for in the struggle, the deceptions, superficialities and fashions of the age are stripped away until, if the writer is fortunate or honest, the point is reached where the age and he come into immediate contact, not by a conscious act merely, but through a kind of final necessity. The writer who does not resist his age, defending himself against all its claims crowding in upon him and overwhelming him, will belong to the literature of fashion. The writer who refuses to realise his age is not likely to belong to literature at all. The apparent exceptions to this rule, such as Blake, are not exceptions at all ; for no one was more painfully concerned with his age than Blake. This brief generalisation, which could only be supported in a much longer argument, I must leave for the moment as it is.

"Ashe of Rings" is a striking example of the literature of fashion. Its technique is not essentially personal, as is the technique of writers so various as Mr. Joyce, Mr. Strachey, and Mr. Eliot ; it is a technique which might at different moments belong to almost anyone who writes in the idiom of the time. It is a generalised technique and, therefore, never quite fits the situation or the emotion it is enlisted to convey ; and so the general effect is always a little false. For it is only a technique which a writer has gradually perfected, not as an exercise, but always for specific and concrete ends, which will render at last his specific vision. Miss Butts' vision, one feels, is sometimes individual ; but it is as if she translated it continuously into something which has scarcely anything to do with her or with it. The fault is a common one, though seldom illustrated with such brilliance as in "Ashe of Rings" ; its prevalence is what makes it interesting. It is the fault of a large class of writing in which the inspiration is seen by the writer as one thing and the literary effect as something totally different ; the first being susceptible of transposition in quite an arbitrary way into the second. When this transposition takes place, the inspiration, which is personal, becomes mere raw material to be manufactured into effects resembling other effects of the time : the

unconscious error here, a very elementary one, being that if this process does not happen, the result will belong neither to the age nor to literature. This perennial error is betrayed in bad writing of all kinds ; in melodrama, the West-end comedies of our time, the novelette, journalism ; but it infects sometimes work which in happier circumstances might have been good. When this occurs it can only be a sign that in a particular writer the spirit of the age is manifesting itself with hesitation, for no writer would take the trouble to secure the outward signs of the age in his work if the influence of the age were felt overpoweringly by him. Miss Butts has made the mistake of trying to express the age instead of herself, which means that the *Zeit Geist* is not immanent in her, and has to be treated as subject-matter rather than expressed as content.

All this being so, it is not surprising that the story itself should turn out to be as old-fashioned as the style is modern. Miss Butts' characters are not merely good and evil ; they are conventionally good and melodramatically evil. She is consistently on the side of virtue, a policy good in itself, but artistically a bad policy, for it inevitably makes the good characters appear prigs ; and she does not even try to comprehend evil, again a bad policy, for the more comprehensible evil is made the more interesting aesthetically it becomes, as we may learn from Shakespeare, as well as from Dostoevsky. All this is elementary, yet Miss Butts' imagination ignores it, even if her style does not. That she has talent both her technique and her imagination, sentimental as it often is, tell us. If that talent were integrated, it might produce something above the ordinary. But at present it is not integrated, and from that fact flow all the main faults of the book.

EDWIN MUIR.

THE POLYGLOTS. By WILLIAM GERHARDI. Cobden-Sanderson. 7s. 6d.

A year or two ago Mr. Gerhardi wrote a novel which was so delightfully funny that it was generally commended to, and even read by, thousands ignorant of the conventions of Russian fiction therein half imitated, half satirised. A second novel is notoriously difficult to write. The merits of the first only increase the obstacles in the way of the second. The unhappy novelist is asked to choose between imitating himself and risking his young reputation by doing something different. Mr. Gerhardi, I suspect, was fully aware of the dilemma. Was "Futility" to be succeeded by still greater futility, or was his humour to be let loose in a new field ? Mr. Gerhardi has composed a compromise which is probably the worst on which he could have tumbled. By a pale imitation of "Futility's" merits he solicits the suffrages of the ninety and nine reviewers who simultaneously and with some pride discussed him. "You expected something like this," he murmurs, "and here it

is." At the same time he adventures into English vulgarity. For the present he is safe. He is carried on the wave of fame. One of the noisiest of his flatterers is a gentleman who in praising "Futility" admitted that he did not know whether its humour was deliberate or unconscious, and who now cannot find enough to say about the subtlety of "The Polyglots." Mr. Gerhardi, in short, is established as an authority on the aftermath of the Russian revolution, and has only to write "Nasha" or "Katya" to send us into shrieks of laughter. But what has he in store against the days when this joke wears thin? Only, I regret to observe, jokes about lingerie.

In so far as "The Polyglots" is not an attenuated imitation of "Futility" it resembles one of those large draper's sheets in the interstices of which are printed *The Observer* and *The Sunday Times*. The popular voice has decided that under-garments, like kippers and lodgers and mothers-in-law, are inherently comic. Perhaps they are. But the best of jokes, as for example the joke about the curate's egg, cannot sustain infinite repetition. How often Mr. Gerhardi plays with lingerie cannot be estimated without reducing this notice to the precision of a laundry list. The Russian general presented sets complete to ladies he admired. One of the most nearly sympathetic characters committed suicide in his sister's set. And there is a small girl with a weak bladder whose knickers have frequently to be adjusted; oh! there is no end to the exquisite comedy of this. But it won't do. When the stage was much more innocent than it is now a big laugh could be won by the hero—Charles Hawtrey, I think—ejaculating "Damn!" Next came "Bloody." Worse words have still to be mentioned. But lingerie is almost exhausted. You come very soon to a garment next the skin. And Mr. Gerhardi has only combinations in reserve for his next novel.

To render his humour fertile Mr. Gerhardi must give up looking for formulæ. His keen sense of the illogical is a real asset to him, and in the farcical application of Slavonic frankness to ethical problems he is scarcely, if at all, surpassed by Tchekov. But he must no longer go about in second-hand clothing. Russian reach-me-downs might be passed off as, at least, unusual. In the cast-off garments of the late Ally Sloper he is almost pathetic. Let us hope that "The Polyglots" marks a stage in his development where he will not long abide.

H. C. HARWOOD.

NOAH'S ARK. By A. WILLIAMS-ELLIS. Jonathan Cape. 7s. 6d.

Mrs. Williams-Ellis's subject is the manner in which a sophisticated and highly self-conscious young woman comes to terms with life, effecting the reconciliation of her intelligence and her instincts. Frances' difficulty, both before and after marriage, was to discover

THE CALENDAR

how she and Edward could live in harmony without it being necessary for them to cut themselves down to this small common denominator. For a long time she is too civilised to succeed, but at last, being unable to work at her modelling, yet needing adventure more than her husband, who finds his in his work, she remembers "what the creatures went into the ark for." "A child . . . Breeding . . . That's what it wants with us next."

Such a theme can only be made capable of supporting a work of art, and so convincing, on condition that it is exploited in terms of character. Though character-drawing in the conventional sense is unnecessary, it is important, if the reader is to be persuaded of the story's truth and so moved by it, that the individuality of the actors' intelligences should be realised. This Mrs. Williams-Ellis never quite accomplishes. Frances introspects at considerable length and holds long conversations about herself with her father-in-law, but her ideas, though copious and good, without being first-rate, lack any characteristic timbre. Nor are her copiously-annotated actions particularly revealing. As a result, the reader, though learning much about Edward and more about Frances, cannot be said to have experienced either of them.

Whether Mrs. Williams-Ellis, through lacking the novelist's peculiar gift of self-projection, is unable to transpose her experience into the keys of imagined character, it would be rash to determine from a first novel. Probably, however, she fails artistically not because of her inexperience, but because her impulse was fundamentally not æsthetic but sententious. Though her intelligence prevents the suspicion of deliberate allegory, her heroine ultimately is not Frances, but Mrs. Everyman. Nevertheless, her book, being written animatedly and intelligently, is to be recommended as a tract that is both amusing and pertinent to the times.

C. H. RICKWORD.

A STORY-TELLER'S STORY. By SHERWOOD ANDERSON. Cape, 7s. 6d.

Mr. Sherwood Anderson is a baffling writer, baffling because baffled. The conscientious flatness of his style (of which the title of his latest book affords an excellent example), its pedestrian movement, its air of groping after the obvious, its un-rhetorical reiteration of unimportant words, continually leaves us in two minds, puzzled and irritated. Clearly it is Mr. Anderson's intention to say what he has to say as plainly as possible, without frills and affectations, looking his meaning squarely in the eye. He thinks that in much modern writing the means of expression have gone astray and suffered corruption, obscuring rather than illuminating what is vital in life; and it is his mission to bring expression up-to-date, restore it to its function, make it correspond to the things that

REVIEWS

really take place inside us. As often as not this rehabilitation seems to consist in perversely putting in what other writers would leave out. When others would be content with saying a man walked along the street, Mr. Anderson would go further. His amplification of the simple movement is easy to imagine. "The man walked along the street. He used his feet in walking, setting one foot carefully in front of the other. The foot that was coming down would press upon the ground, and a little later the man would do the same with the other foot. The man would go on doing this until he was tired and then, perhaps, he would sit down."

This is not an unfair parody: Mr. Anderson is often more unkind to himself. Part of his intention, it seems, is to make the conscious and the unconscious mind change places; we are made aware of difficulties in the management of the body and limbs—difficulties with which we were familiar in infancy but which we have long outgrown. Conversely, in Mr. Anderson's world it is possible for a man to discuss with a woman whether he should take off his clothes in her presence. To be sure the man was a little drunk; but this condition Mr. Anderson scarcely considers such a divagation from true normality—the normality he is searching for—as ordinary sobriety. People to him are like houses. It is a metaphor to which he continually returns: their outsides convey nothing to him, but sometimes through a door or window he gets a glimpse of what is within: and it is at these critical moments, when he has found himself, so to speak, that he seems least of all to be writing about human beings. In the stress of emotion his characters neither talk nor behave credibly; they are a law unto themselves, mouthing and gesticulating in the flawless isolation of a synthetic world.

Mr. Anderson is disgusted with industrialised America. His pilgrimage through it is the subject of "A Story-Teller's Story," and he brings it vividly before our eyes, fusing the real and the imaginative life. It is a record of successive dissatisfactions, of occupations thrown up, of casual friendships, of literary beginnings, aspirations and achievements, of years of disappointment and moments of ecstasy. It is convincing because, here, Mr. Anderson is writing about himself: the amazing strength of his personality survives his presentation of it, the fact of his enthusiasm sublimates, as it were, the objects of his enthusiasm (though they are respectable enough) and makes us like him more and more. "Like" his characters is a thing we can rarely do, even if (which is uncertain) he means us to like them. And it is in this connection that we feel warranted in imputing a fundamental falsity to his reconstruction of life. The first question the reader asks himself about a character is, Do I like him? One cannot go on living with a person, either in fiction or in life, uncertain whether or not one likes him. That its hero was an unmitigated cad must be most people's recollection of *Many Marriages*. Yet Mr. Anderson, in narrating his history,

THE CALENDAR

entirely ignored such a preoccupation, treating a situation that had no interest except for its rights and wrongs as though they did not exist. The demoralisation that is implied by the contemporary American doctrine of "uplift" is a thing to deplore; but it is no remedy to invent an arbitrary human consciousness from which the moral sense and all its implications are excluded. Mr. Anderson does not quite exclude them: he finds substitutes in the relation between the workman and the materials of his craft, in the sensation of "cleanness" that comes of turning out a good piece of work. But that is to confuse morality with æsthetics. He wants all men to love each other; but they are not, apparently, to accept any responsibility for the outcome of their loves.

Is it Mr. Anderson's seriousness that is at the root of all this? He wants to write, but still more (the despised Puritan working in him) he wants to be serious. "What a man wants," he in an unguarded moment confesses, "is to be able to justify himself to himself." Precisely; and we recommend the statement to Mr. Anderson as the theme of some future novel, begging him not to twist the meaning of the term "self-justification" into "self-realisation." But "self-justification through Art" is not a good maxim for a writer, and it will not add to our enjoyment though he save his soul in every line.

L. P. HARTLEY.

CONTEMPORARY TECHNIQUES OF POETRY: A POLITICAL ANALOGY. By ROBERT GRAVES. Hogarth Press, 3s. 6d.

A pamphlet war might do a good deal to improve the modern race of poets; at least there is room for a literary analogy to Bernhardi's too-abused theory. Toleration or indifference has gone so far, and so prostituted the terms of praise, that it is impossible to tell from an ordinary review whether a book of poems contains really original work or if it just avoids the more obvious common-places. Under this wadding the feeble shoots are protected from the contempt which would naturally cut them off, and live to blossom in collected mediocrity—absorbing so much sun and air from the healthier growths. The task of pruning is such a delicate one that autocratic statements are not to be recommended; it is by personal evaluations, such as this essay of Mr. Graves's, backed up by the knowledge of practice, that some order may be introduced into the present muddle. Only, if pamphlets are to be as useful as I think they can be, they must be of a price that allows them unrestricted circulation.

Mr. Graves draws his analogy from contemporary politics by dividing the poets into three parties—Conservatives, Liberals, and Left-Wing reformers, revolutionaries and exiles. His comments on the techniques of the two constitutional parties are mischievous and mildly destructive; they have the wisdom-in-humour, the disarming smile which always saves his prose divagations from

REVIEWS

becoming portentous, even in the treatment of final problems, but opens a path for casual evasions which does not always tempt him unsuccessfully.

"I am the historian merely ; but having regard to the enormous dead-weight of prestige behind the Conservative view, and to the popular success of the Central Party, I shall possibly find myself making out the clearest case for the party which is least vocal, the Left Wing."

A most courteous assassin, and we have no desire to quarrel with the means that lead to so admirable an end. But is it simply the desire to champion the oppressed which enables Mr. Graves to make out the best case for the less-appreciated of the younger poets? Do not their merits entitle them not merely to an equalitarian, but to a preferential judgment? To get itself said, any new thing has to break up, more or less, and re-model, the old forms of expression. All the poets lumped together as the tradition were innovators in their time and none of the new modifications of verse technique quoted by Mr. Graves seems to us incapable of being absorbed into the English tradition. It is rather too much of a sacrifice to surrender to merely conventional versifiers the title of traditionalists, so that those who have real vigour of expression must be branded, though honourably, revolutionaries. The blood of Donne and Milton is more likely to be found in these apparent throw-outs than in the approved stereotypes which crowd our more sumptuous anthological mausoleums.

We differ rather in approach than in conclusions from Mr. Graves, and must commend his essay as a timely and valuable piece of propaganda. His chapter on "Structure" is most suggestive, though condensed. The psychological basis of verse is a subject which has occupied him before and led to interesting statements. Changes in the physiology of verse, diction and rhythm, are manifestations only of the more elusive renovation of the core of the mind.

The outlook for poetry, if it can find its audience and assert true values, is certainly more encouraging than it was twenty years ago. Many powerful conventions have been realised to be demoralising, and experience is seen to be pretty well autonomous within the conditions of successful expression. The war of attrition against critical inertia still needs speeding up, and for this short raids into the opposing trenches are most efficacious.

E. R.

TOM MOORE'S DIARY. *A Selection edited by J. B. PRIESTLY.*
Cambridge University Press. 6s.

One agrees with Mr. Priestly that this Diary, so largely concerned with affairs of transitory interest, "gains from being compressed." It would, perhaps, have gained more had the compression been more stringent, or had what remains been more fully edited. In

THE CALENDAR

places the interest flags owing to a lack of information about the people concerned, and one easily loses the thread when, after a lapse of several weeks, there is no indication as to when the next entry was written. A selection, however, is certainly justified by the light which the Diary throws not only on the social and literary activities of the time, but also on Moore's personality—though it does not reveal the latter so favourably as Mr. Priestly implies.

As a retailer of gossip Moore was admirably qualified. His knowledge of literature and his fame as a poet allowed him to meet with most of the contemporary writers and artists, while his attractive person, fluting voice and social charm gave him the entry to the houses of the cultured nobility. As a result his Diary is full of amusing incidents and witty anecdotes. He heard Wordsworth affirm to a large party of people that he had published the "White Doe" in quarto "to show the world his own opinion of it," and he writes amusingly of several ladies who insisted on kissing him while crossing the Irish Channel in spite of his efforts to get away and be sick. From this point of view the Diary is full of interest, but the portrait it gives of Moore himself is distasteful. His merits are obvious: he did not bear grudges, he sang prettily, he was generous and entertaining, and very affectionate with his wife; indeed, had his profession been other than an art, he would remain for posterity a good-natured, rather insipid character. But he was a poet, and since he was unable to dissociate social from literary values, his work is almost worthless. He is an early specimen of a type now common—the social-artist and social-critic. Writing was valuable to him only as a passport into good society or as an activity in which he indulged as in a ball or a dinner party. His approach to literature was fundamentally as frivolous as his social conduct.

D. M. G.

WORDS AND IDIOMS: Studies in the English Language. By LOGAN PEARSALL SMITH. Constable. 7s. 6d.

Of these five interesting and learned essays on aspects of English, "Four Romantic Words" and "English Idioms" are, perhaps, the most immediately suggestive. For the old question between the romantic and the classical has been raised again during these last few years, and the importance of idiom as a prospective fertiliser of a literary language grown poor is being more and more clearly recognised. The causes of the present impoverishment of literary language are defined with admirable clarity in "English Idioms." There has been a "remarkable and modern growth of idiomatic phases in our speech," the author says, and this may be explained "as a reaction against the deadness of much contemporary English—the increasing use of life-forsaken words in that jargon of science and abstract thought which is so characteristic of the present age.

REVIEWS

. . . . The truth is that learned languages, having for their main object the naming of concepts, naturally tend to colourless abstraction. Representing the triumph of reason over the incoherence of immediate sensation, they embody the results of science in their vocabulary, and the laws of thought in their grammar. For the purpose of order and abstraction, they reject much of the illogical but psychological element of experience, the bodily sensations and the lively feelings which accompany sensation, and all those reasons of the imagination and the heart of which, in Pascal's phrase, 'the reason knows nothing.'" With this admirable summary by an acute student, it is difficult to disagree. But if Mr. Smith is right, if language has in the last few generations become a better vehicle for thought and a worse medium for imaginative literature, the further conclusion must follow: that the main stream of vitality in the age which has preceded ours and in our own has gone and is going into science and abstract thought rather than into literature. This has been asserted by Mr. Bertrand Russell; and the immense vitality of modern science, the comparative poverty of modern literature, must, indeed, be self-evident. The interesting thing is the effect this has had on language. It is not that language has been modified merely by the inclusion of new scientific and abstract terms; it has been used so long in a particular way that now a philosopher like Mr. Russell can handle it easily and beautifully, as if it were an instrument which completely satisfied him, while an imaginative writer like Mr. Joyce has to distort it as the only hope of amplifying it, and in addition has to fall back freely on idiom (whose function, Mr. Smith asserts, "is to bring back ideas from the understanding to the sensations from which they were originally derived"), in order to achieve imaginative and psychological solidity. It may be that the habit of the age and the language has become so strong that the imaginative artist is unable to seize impressions and emotions immediately; and has rather to work back to them from the concept and thus to attain deliberately what some ages have started with. This is as much as to say that we live in an age of enlightenment, but also that there is an imaginative revolt in train against it.

All these deductions from Mr. Smith's premises find indirect support in his interesting essay on "Four Romantic Words." These words, "romantic," "originality," "creation," "genius," have certainly less power now than they had a century ago, perhaps because they are no longer felt imaginatively, as the artist feels them, but formulated for the purposes of thought. But, formulated, they are found to contain very little. For the moment the genius of the language has left them high and dry, counters for the use of scholars and rhetoricians. Thus the word "romantic," which gradually grew in power in the eighteenth century until it became the symbol of the revolt against the eighteenth century, is no adequate symbol for the revolt of our time against the tyranny of

an enlightenment on a far greater scale. It rose as a specific response to a specific human need ; and what we lack is a symbol for a very different need, that of our own time. No doubt that symbol will sometime arise.

E. M.

PREJUDICE AND PROMISE IN XVTH CENTURY ENGLAND.

C. L. KINGSFORD. Clarendon Press. 15s.

In his treatment of the subject in the series of six Ford Lectures delivered in 1923 and put together with five useful appendices in this book, Mr. Kingsford has succeeded in giving us a very presentable picture of XVth Century England. Whether the title is well chosen or the apologetic vein in which he introduces his theme, as if he really did think that everybody would be bored, is open to question. Only if one approaches the XVth Century as an interlude between the questionable glories of the Edwards and the equally expensive pomp of the Tudors does it appear to be dull and without interest.

No one who has witnessed the trial scene in "Saint Joan," with its dramatisation of the central struggle of the period when the Middle Ages were passing and the Renaissance coming in, can ever again excusably speak with a certain patronising tolerance of the XVth century. The incidents and the events of the Hundred Years War and of the antagonism of the Houses of Lancaster and York are mere corks that show us the way the currents are flowing. Feudalism collapsing, nationalism arising—these two facts in themselves are enough to make the century fascinating.

In the first two lectures one does not feel that Mr. Kingsford quite grips his subject. They are interesting, but one has the impression that it has all to do with that most unreal and utterly superficial history of Courts. Perhaps it is necessary to uncover the dead monarchs of the dynastic arguments and wars of the dead rose leaves and dried dung with which the prejudice of the later age strewn them.

In his lectures on "Social Life and the Wars of the Roses" and "West Country Piracy" he has succeeded in whetting one's appetite. There must be a fire of economic activity and of social pressure underneath this smoke of banditry and piracy in Devon and in Cornwall. Opportunity obviously there was for loot and more profit therein than in honest exchange and peaceful intercourse with the merchant cities of Spain and Italy.

Still, the English seamen are at that very primitive stage at which, for the most part, they are lying in wait for the great galleys and carracks which the hand of Providence in the guise of the Gulf Stream and the South-West Wind has driven against the rocks of the Cornish coast.

Fowey, Plymouth, Dartmouth and Poole, it is evident from what Mr. Kingsford shows us, became nurseries of seamen because

REVIEWS

the elements allowed them more easily to grow rich as "sea-beggars" than as hard-working artificers or patient fisher-folk.

Here we have another race and a new generation of Vikings—pirates all. In the map of Fowey Estuary which he gives us we are able to see at a glance in this one instance what becomes apparent to the visitor who observes the inlets of Devon and of Cornwall. Up these stretches of deep water with their narrow entrances across which, as at Dartmouth, bowmen could command the entire fairway, enemies even when better equipped and more heavily armed found it hard to pass. So at an early date Bristol and Totnes, Southampton and Exeter were able to develop as communities with a commerce, and behind that commerce an industry undisturbed in its growth. These factors had much more to do with the success of Peupous and Drake, of Pay and Granville than is generally recognised. One has only to contrast the home-keeping habits and the backward economy of the gentry of Glamorgan with that of the no more hospitable "West Wales" to see how important was this factor of geography in the development of the Devon seamen.

Hakluyt gives us many hints, and that "Libel of English Policie," written in the XVth century (in many ways one of the most significant writings of the age), affords us many more, of those stirrings behind the incidents recorded in this book. Quite the most noticeable omission is any reference to the "Libel," despite the mention it makes of Fowey and of other West Country ports.

J. T. W. NEWBOLD.

CONTACT COLLECTION OF CONTEMPORARY WRITERS.

Three Mountains Press, Paris. 3\$.

It is not at all understandable what intention governed the collection of these stories, poems and articles into one volume, unless it were an open-minded but uncritical catholicism. Good work is mixed with bad, modernism with conservatism. On the one hand Miss Stein would seem to be elaborating, tediously and very boringly, a small point of consciousness; on the other Miss Sinclair tells a long ghost story with the conventional aids of local colour and objective discussion—even of an epilogue beginning, "A year later . . ." The poetry is not interesting. Mr. Marsden Hartley has a certain sense of rhythm, but in the single poem here printed shows no other quality; Miss Mina Loy's sixty pages, despite her idiosyncratic spacing of type, is doggerel; and the two poems by Miss Sitwell have previously appeared in the volume "Troy Park," already noticed in THE CALENDAR.

The best stories are those by Miss Butts, Mr. Ford, and Miss Barnes. The very amusing extract from "Work in Progress" by Mr. Joyce cannot here be seen in true perspective. Messrs. Hemingway, Herman, and McAlmon write naturalistically of youthful American life in small towns, and amongst other con-

tributors are Mr. Havelock Ellis and Mr. Norman Douglas. Mr. W. C. Williams's critique of Miss Marianne Moore's poetry is enthusiastic but not very explicit.

It is to be hoped that if another Contact Collection is to appear it will contain more work by fewer authors, for at a time when there is so little uniformity of method one needs more than a single example of an author's work if one is to form an opinion of it.

D. M. G.

Among New Books

THE CHARACTER OF JOHN DRYDEN. By ALAN LUBBOCK. Hogarth Press. 2s. 6d.

The side of Dryden's character which Mr. Lubbock justly emphasises is his conservatism, for it was this that gave him the mental leisure to pursue his personal endeavour of helping on the perfection of language, whether in prose or verse. In a remarkable degree he accepted the ideas of his age—or at least such of them as were useful to him—and his aim was not to increase their range, but to give them the benefit of lucid expression. Mr. Lubbock's suggestion that "his conservatism came not from timidity, not from laziness, not from snobbish conceit or suspicion, but from intense and passionate gusto, from ardent enjoyment of life as it was, from anxiety to seize and incorporate into himself all his surroundings," should be qualified: it was not only these reasons that prevented him from attempting "to say anything new," but also a fundamental lack. His was not a large mind, in the sense that he had not, and therefore could not develop, an original or personal attitude to life. This accounts for the neglect which Dryden suffered from the nineteenth century. So much Mr. Eliot has already remarked (in another of the "Hogarth Essays"), but the amplification of this criticism which Mr. Lubbock implies is important as serving to show Dryden's achievement in a fairer perspective with that of other poets and of Milton in particular. Mr. Lubbock himself does not attempt the comparison, but his essay has a bearing on Mr. Eliot's judgment and its apparent denigration of Milton in favour of Dryden.

Mr. Lubbock's Essay is interesting as far as it goes, but there are other qualities in Dryden's character which he might have discussed, and which would have instilled a more lively blood into the rather plethoric figure with which he presents us.

SENLIN: A BIOGRAPHY. By CONRAD AIKEN. Hogarth Press. 3s. 6d.

In this long poem Mr. Aiken has failed technically to avoid monotony, and for this there are several reasons. The metre he has used is a free pentametre (with occasional three foot lines), but his habit of alternating weak and strong endings and of rhyming usually the latter, robs his verse of the elasticity of blank verse and does not allow it the full possible vigour of rhyme. Then, too, the frequent repetition of lines and phrases with no, or but slight, variation is wearisome and tends to distract the mind in the second context without throwing new light on the statement. Again, the reiterated interrogations are very unsatisfying, and suggest that Mr. Aiken is uncertain as to his own intention, but hopes by this means to pass off his uncertainty as intentional. The texture of the poem is often spoilt by the use of rather precious metaphorical language in which the imagery does not appear to be sustained by the meaning, but to be appended fancifully. These defects are such as to weaken the movement of the poem and frequently to obscure the author's meaning.